



Rank the District

Grow Democracy DC
Civic Education Fund

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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4 Days Left: What to Watch in Washington, DC's First Ranked Choice Voting Election

June 12, 2026 – This primary season, DC voters are using ranked choice voting for the first time. Ranked choice voting passed with 73% of the vote in 2024 as part of Initiative 83, which also included a provision to let independents vote in DC's primary elections.

[Lisa D.T. Rice](#), Project Lead of the Grow Democracy DC Civic Education Fund and Proposer of Initiative 83, is available for interviews through Election Day.

"With ranked choice voting, candidates work harder for our votes, and they need over 50% of the vote to win," said **Lisa D.T. Rice, Project Lead of Grow Democracy DC Civic Education Fund and Proposer of Initiative 83**. "In crowded fields, we get majority winners and your vote has more power. If your first choice loses, your vote still has an impact. Remember: vote your favorite #1, and then rank your backup choices – 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Ranking backup choices never hurts your #1 choice, and only rank candidates you support!"

Here is information on how RCV is impacting the Washington, DC election, and how it has worked in other cities and states:

1. DC candidates and organizations are quickly adapting to RCV, including with "cross-endorsements."

With RCV, voters are able to express support for several candidates. This encourages candidates to demonstrate areas of common ground with their opponents, in order to earn second and third choices from voters ranking those rivals first.

So far, several pairs of candidates have "cross-endorsed" each other in DC; these candidate pairs encouraged their supporters to rank them first and second. This includes the [Ward 1 council race](#), the [At-Large council](#) race, and the [special election](#) for At-Large council.

There are several examples of local unions, organizations, and elected officials endorsing multiple candidates – like [Jews United for Justice](#), [DMV New Liberals](#), [Greater Greater Washington](#), [Bike Walk & Bus PAC](#), the [Washington Teachers Union](#), and others.

Other candidates and organizations have not explicitly cross-endorsed, but have encouraged voters to take advantage of their ranked choice ballots and rank multiple candidates. There is extensive evidence that voters listen to candidates about how to complete their RCV ballot.

- 2. With ranked choice voting, we will get majority winners in crowded fields. Voters also have more voice in crowded fields, because they can still weigh in between the strongest candidates if their favorite can't win. For example, in last year's New York City primary, 243,808 voters ranked a non-frontrunner first but had their vote count for one of the finalist candidates because of RCV.**

Dating back to 2012, every citywide office and council seat (except Wards 4 and 6) has seen at least one candidate win the Democratic primary without a majority. This will change with the implementation of ranked choice voting.

Meanwhile, voters can rank their preferences without fear of wasting their vote – and know that if their first choice can't win, their vote will simply count for their backup choice.

- 3. There have been significant efforts, led by the DC Board of Elections, to educate voters on ranked choice voting. Data also shows that voters like and understand ranked choice voting in other jurisdictions where it's used.**

From New York City to Alaska, [exit surveys](#) consistently show that voters understand and like RCV. The median rate of valid ballots in RCV elections is 99.8%.

Rank the District has led over 125 voter education efforts across the District to ensure that DC voters are ready to rank their ballots, with a focus on Wards 1, 5, 7, and 8 as well as senior centers. Rank the District's work supplements the DC Board of Elections, which has produced a full implementation plan and conducted [over 200](#) outreach and education events across the District.

- 4. It's possible – but uncommon – that the candidate with the most 1st-choice support on election night doesn't win. That's a feature of ranked choice voting, not a bug.**

Of the 548 single-winner RCV races since 2004, the candidate with the most 1st-choice support has won 516 times (or [94%](#)). Of the 32 “come-from-behind” winners, 30 were in 2nd place when counting voters' first choices, and two were in 3rd place.

“Come-from-behind” winners tend to occur when one or more of these things happen:

- The 1st-choice leader has a small lead
- The 1st-choice leader earns 40% or fewer of voters' first choices
- The 1st-choice leader does not build support beyond their base
- The 1st-choice leader represents a smaller portion of the electorate, with the majority “splitting” its first choices among the other candidates. One of those candidates is able to consolidate those votes and win because of ranked choice voting.

5. The timeline for results is driven by late-arriving mail ballots, not just ranked choice voting.

The DC Board of Elections has decided to run its first round-by-round ranked choice count on June 21. This timeline is about waiting for most mail ballots to arrive, not ranked choice voting. The RCV count itself is the click of a button and will be nearly instantaneous.

In [most cities](#), round-by-round RCV results are released on Election Night or the day after, including in two [San Francisco](#) special elections earlier this month.

We respect the Board's focus on accurate and transparent results in this first use of RCV.

Finally, here's a reminder of what voters should know about ranked choice voting:

- Vote for your favorite candidate 1st.
- Rank your backup choices – 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th.
- You can rank as many candidates as you like, up to five – only rank candidates you support!
- Remember, ranking gives your vote more power. And there are no downsides to ranking more candidates – ranking backup choices never hurts your favorite.
- If your first choice loses, your vote simply moves to your next choice.
- The winner always gets over 50% support.

And here's a full description of how votes are counted in a ranked choice voting election:

Voters can rank candidates in order of preference: first, second, third and so on.

If a candidate receives more than half of the first choices, that candidate wins, just like in any other election. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Voters who ranked that candidate "number 1" will have their vote count for their next choice. This repeats until a candidate wins with more than 50% of the votes.

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Additional Resources:

- [Rank the District](#)
 - [How to rank your ballot](#)
 - [Rank the District videos](#)
- DC Board of Elections
 - [Ranked Choice Voting page](#)
 - [Media Guide](#)
- [League of Women Voters of DC](#)
- FairVote:
 - [Where RCV is used](#)
 - [RCV voter surveys](#)
 - [How ranked choice voting is impacting the Washington, DC primary](#)
 - [How to display RCV results](#)
 - [Ranked Choice Voting Candidate Strategy Guide](#)

- [Impact of cross-endorsements in ranked choice voting elections](#)
- [Ben's Chili Bowl ranked choice voting explainer video](#)