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City of Irvine, Measure Directing the Use of Ranked Choice Voting for City Council Member and Mayoral Elections After January 1, 2028

Shall a measure that directs, to the extent technically and financially feasible, the use of ranked choice voting for City Council Member and Mayoral Elections occurring after January 1, 2028, be adopted?

What your vote means

YES	NO
A “Yes” vote is in favor of adopting the measure and transitioning to RCV elections after January 1, 2028, if the specified technical and financial conditions are met.	A “No” vote is against adopting the measure.

For and against

FOR	AGAINST
Kathleen Treseder Councilmember	James Mai Vice Mayor



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Full Text of Measure D City of Irvine

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF IRVINE, CALIFORNIA, DIRECTING, TO THE EXTENT TECHNICALLY AND FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE, THE USE OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING FOR CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AND MAYORAL ELECTIONS OCCURRING AFTER JANUARY 1, 2028

THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF IRVINE DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT TO MUNICIPAL CODE. Title 1 (General Services), Division 2 (City Council), Chapter 6 (Ranked Choice Voting Elections) is added to read in its entirety as follows:

CHAPTER 6. – RANKED CHOICE VOTING ELECTIONS

Sec. 1-2-601. – Definitions.

Sec. 1-2-602. – General Provisions.

Sec. 1-2-603. – Ballot.

Sec. 1-2-604. – Tabulation.

Sec. 1-2-605. – Ties.

Sec. 1-2-606. – Skipped Rankings; Multiple Rankings for One Candidate.

Sec. 1-2-607. – Elimination of Undervotes, Overvotes, and Exhausted Ballots.

Sec. 1-2-608. – Reports.

Sec. 1-2-609. – Continuing the Tally to Two Candidates.

Sec. 1-2-610. – Manual Tally.

Sec. 1-2-611. – Election Procedures if Ranked Choice Voting is Not Feasible.

Sec. 1-2-601. – Definitions.

The definitions contained in this section shall govern the construction, meaning, and application of words and phrases used in this chapter. Words or phrases used in this chapter that are not specifically defined in this section shall be interpreted in the manner required by Section 1-1-102.

“Choice” means an indication on a ballot of a voter’s assigned ranking of candidates (i.e., first choice, second choice, third choice, etc.) for any single office according to the voter’s preference.

“Continuing ballot” means a ballot that counts towards a continuing candidate.

“Continuing candidate” means a candidate that has not been eliminated.

“Majority of votes” shall mean more than fifty percent (50%) of the votes cast on continuing ballots.

“Next ranked” means the highest ranked choice for a continuing candidate.

“Ranked choice voting” shall mean an election system in which voters rank the candidates for office in order of preference, and the ballots are counted in rounds that, in the case of a single-winner election, simulate a series of runoffs until one candidate receives a majority of votes. Also known as “instant runoff voting.”

“Round of counting” or *“round”* means a step in the counting process during which votes for all continuing candidates are tabulated for the purpose of determining whether a candidate has achieved a majority of the votes cast for a particular office, and, absent a majority, which candidate or candidates must be eliminated. During the tally of the election, preliminary results of city contests using RCV shall be released at the same time as all other city contests have preliminary results released.

“Skipped ranking” means a ballot contains a higher ranking with no candidate indicated and contains a lower ranking with a candidate indicated for a single office.

“Vote” means a ballot choice that is counted toward the election of a candidate. During each round of counting, each continuing ballot contains one vote. All first choices are votes and lower ranked choices are potential runoff votes that may, in accordance with the requirements of this chapter, be credited to and become votes for a candidate.

“Voting equipment” means all ballots and/or voting devices, vote tabulating systems and/or similar or related systems to be used in the conduct of the City’s election, including but not limited to paper ballot systems, optical scan systems, and touchscreen systems.

Sec. 1-2-602. – General Provisions.

- A. Except as specified in Section 1-2-611.A, ranked choice voting elections for single-winner city offices shall be conducted according to the procedures in this Chapter.
- B. Ranked choice voting shall commence with all city council member and mayoral elections from and after January 1, 2028.
- C. Ranked Choice Voting shall not preclude the City from consolidating its municipal elections with the County.

Sec. 1-2-603. – Ballot.

- A. The ranked choice voting ballot shall allow voters to rank at least five choices. The City Council may set a higher number of rankings by resolution.
- B. The ballot shall not interfere with a voter’s ability to rank a write-in candidate.



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- C. Instructions provided to voters shall conform substantially to the following specifications but may be modified based on ballot design and voting equipment used:

"Vote by ranking candidates in your order of choice. You may rank as many or as few candidates as you choose. Select a different candidate for each ranking. Select only one candidate in each ranking. Ranking more candidates will not hurt your higher ranked candidates. Do not skip rankings. In the event you do skip a ranking, your vote will be given to your next continuing candidate."

Sec. 1-2-604. – Tabulation.

The ballots shall be counted in rounds.

- A. In the first round, every ballot shall count as a vote towards the first-choice candidate; provided, however, that if no first choice candidate is indicated on a ballot, then that ballot shall count as a vote towards its next ranked candidate.
- B. After any round, if any candidate receives a majority of votes from the continuing ballots, that candidate shall be declared the winner.
- C. If no candidate receives a majority, the candidate receiving the fewest number of votes shall be eliminated.
- D. Every ballot counting towards the eliminated candidate shall be advanced to the next ranked continuing candidate. All the continuing ballots for all continuing candidates shall be counted again in each new round.

Sec. 1-2-605. – Ties.

If two or more candidates tie for the fewest number of votes, the candidate to eliminate shall be chosen by lot.

If there are only two candidates in the final round and they are tied, the winner will be the candidate who received the higher number of votes in round one.

Sec. 1-2-606. – Skipped Rankings; Multiple Rankings for One Candidate.

Consistent with Section 1-2-604.D, in the first or any round, if any ballot reaches a ranking with no candidate indicated, that ballot shall immediately be advanced to the next ranking; If a voter ranks a single candidate more than once, only the highest ranking given to that candidate is accepted, and each lower ranking for that same candidate is ignored as if it were a skipped ranking.

Sec. 1-2-607. – Elimination of Undervotes, Overvotes, and Exhausted Ballots.

For purposes of this Section and Section 1-2-608, the following definitions shall apply:

- A. "Undervote" means a ballot that is blank and has no candidates indicated at any ranking.
- B. "Overvote" means a ballot which indicates a vote for more than one candidate in the applicable round of voting.
- C. "Exhausted" means a ballot that cannot be advanced to the next round because no further continuing candidates are ranked on the ballot.

For each round, all ballots that qualify as undervote, overvote, or exhausted shall not count toward any candidate, nor shall such ballots be counted in any further round.

Sec. 1-2-608. – Reports.

The following reports shall be produced for public review.

- A. The "summary report" for a contest shall mean a report that lists the candidate vote totals in each round, and the cumulative numbers of undervotes, overvotes, and exhausted ballots in each round.
- B. The "ballot cast report" for a contest shall mean a report that lists, for each ballot, the candidate or candidates indicated at each ranking, the precinct of the ballot, and whether the ballot was cast by a vote-by-mail ballot. In the report, the ballots shall be listed in an order that does not permit the order in which they were cast in each precinct to be reconstructed.
- C. The "comprehensive report" for a contest shall mean a report that lists the vote totals in the summary report by precinct. The report shall list, for each round, the number of ballots cast in each precinct that:
 - 1. were tallied as votes for each candidate in that round,
 - 2. have been declared undervotes,
 - 3. have been declared overvotes, cumulatively for all previous rounds and inclusive of the reported round of tabulation, and
 - 4. have been declared exhausted cumulatively for all previous rounds and inclusive of the reported round of tabulation.
- D. Mode and manner of release. Preliminary versions of the summary report and ballot image report shall be made available as soon as possible after the commencement of the canvass of votes cast. The summary report, ballot image report, comprehensive report, and preliminary versions of the summary report and ballot image report shall be made available to the public during the canvass via the Internet and by other means. The ballot image report and preliminary versions of the ballot image report shall be made available in a plain text electronic format. In any case, preliminary versions of these reports shall be made available to the public prior to the commencement of the manual tally.



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Sec. 1-2-609. – Continuing the Tally to Two Candidates.

If a winner is declared when there are three or more continuing candidates (including the winner), and if the vote tabulating system allows for it, additional rounds of tallying shall occur until there are only two candidates left for reporting purposes only.

Sec. 1-2-610. – Manual Tally.

- A. A preliminary version of the comprehensive report shall be made available to the public prior to the selection of precincts for the public one percent manual tally, as provided by state law.
- B. After each round of the manual tally, the second and third choice votes shall be assigned based on the candidate totals in the summary round-by-round report for the entire contest.

Sec. 1-2-611. – Election Procedures if Ranked Choice Voting is Not Feasible.

- A. If the voting equipment cannot feasibly accommodate ranked choice voting, then the City shall continue to use the plurality voting procedures that were used prior to January 1, 2028, until such time as the voting equipment can feasibly accommodate ranked choice voting.
- B. If the voting equipment cannot feasibly accommodate all of the procedures in section 1-2-601 through 1-2-610, the City Clerk may make changes to those procedures provided that ranked choice voting shall still be used and the smallest feasible number of changes made until such time as the voting equipment can accommodate those procedures in their entirety.
- C. If the Secretary of State changes its currently adopted Instant Runoff Voting Guidelines ("Instant Runoff Voting in Charter Counties and Charter Cities") for the conduct of ranked choice voting elections and the voting equipment used to conduct the County of Orange's elections can accommodate the changes in the State's guidelines, the City Clerk shall have the option of adopting those guidelines, in whole or in part, in lieu of the ranked choice voting procedures in this section.
- D. Managing the Cost of RCV for Irvine
 1. For purposes of this sub-section 1-2-611(D) the following definitions shall apply:
 - i. "Estimated Election Cost" means the City's adopted budget for the next election that will include a single-winner city office.
 - ii. "RCV Cost" means the additional cost to the city above and beyond the latest currently provided Estimated Election Cost for the next non-ranked choice voting election that will include a single-winner city office.
 - iii. "RCV Cost Limit" means 0.23% of the then-current total city general fund budget for the fiscal year within which the general election will be held.
 2. The RCV Cost shall be calculated by adding (i) the average of the low and high range estimate from the Orange County Registrar of Voters regarding the County of Orange's additional costs that will be billed to the city for the use of ranked choice voting at the next scheduled election that includes a single-winner city office to (ii) an estimate from the City Clerk of the additional City costs to be incurred for the use of ranked choice voting at the next scheduled election that includes a single-winner city office.
 3. If the RCV Cost is greater than the RCV Cost Limit, then the City Council shall not transition to ranked choice voting at the next council member and/or mayoral election. The comparison of RCV Cost to RCV Cost Limit shall occur prior to each subsequent council member and/or mayoral election until the City transitions to ranked choice voting.
 4. Once a ranked choice voting election has occurred during any election cycle in the city, ranked choice voting shall continue to be used at every subsequent election unless the voters replace it with another system. This sub-section 1-2-611(D) only applies to the first usage of ranked choice voting.

SECTION 2. CONSTRUCTION. To the maximum extent authorized by law, this Ordinance shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the right of initiative reserved to the people by the California Constitution. Without limiting the foregoing, nothing in this Ordinance is intended to diminish or otherwise alter applicable requirements of state and federal law.

SECTION 3. INCONSISTENT PROVISIONS. Any provisions of the Irvine Municipal Code, or appendices thereto, or any other ordinances of the City inconsistent herewith, to the extent of such inconsistencies and no further, are hereby repealed.

SECTION 4. SEVERABILITY. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance. The voters of the City hereby declare that they would have passed this Ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, and phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

SECTION 5. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT DETERMINATION. The voters of the City hereby find that this Ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(2) and 15061(b)(3) in that the proposed changes are not anticipated to result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and it can be seen with certainty that they will not have the potential of creating a significant effect on the environment; rather, the changes effectuated by this Ordinance merely change the order of voting procedures for city council member and mayoral elections.

SECTION 6. FUTURE AMENDMENTS. Pursuant to article II, section 10(c) of the California Constitution, the provisions contained in this Ordinance may be amended by a five-sevenths vote of the City Council only to the extent such amendments further or expand the intent and objectives set forth in this Ordinance. All other amendments or any proposed repeal of the provisions contained in this Ordinance shall become effective only



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when approved by the voters.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance shall go into effect ten (10) days after the date on which the election results are declared by the City Council.

**Impartial Analysis
City of Irvine
Measure D**

**City of Irvine
Measure Directing the Use of Ranked Choice Voting for City Council Member and
Mayoral Elections After January 1, 2028**

The City Council of the City of Irvine has placed a measure before the voters that would amend the Irvine Municipal Code to use ranked choice voting (RCV) for City Council member and mayoral elections after January 1, 2028, if certain technical and financial conditions are satisfied.

The City of Irvine (City) currently uses a plurality voting system for City Council member and mayoral elections. Under that system, voters vote for only one candidate and the person receiving the most votes wins the election even if they do not receive a majority of the votes.

In RCV elections, voters rank their choices in order of preference, such as first, second, third, and so on. If no candidate wins a majority of first-place votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and ballots ranking that candidate are transferred to the next-ranked continuing candidate. This process repeats until one candidate secures a majority of the votes counted in that round.

Under the proposed measure, the City would transition to RCV after January 1, 2028, once all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- The available voting equipment can feasibly accommodate RCV;
- Transitioning to RCV will not prevent the consolidation of City elections with elections conducted by the County of Orange; and
- The additional cost for an RCV election is not more than 0.23% of the City’s general fund budget for the fiscal year during which the proposed RCV election would be held (RCV Cost Cap). For reference, 0.23% of the City’s fiscal year 2026-2027 general fund budget of approximately \$312.1 million is approximately \$717,790. However, the actual RCV Cost Cap would be calculated using the general fund budget for the fiscal year in which the proposed RCV election would be held.

When the above conditions are met and the City transitions to RCV, the City will continue to conduct elections by RCV at every City Council member and mayoral election unless the voters choose another voting system.

The proposed measure requires that RCV ballots allow the ranking of a minimum of five candidates, that write-in candidates be permitted, and that voters receive specific instructions regarding RCV. The proposed measure also establishes procedures for tabulating votes, resolving ties, resolving voting mistakes (e.g., skipping a ranking, or giving the same ranking to more than one candidate), conducting a manual vote tally, and providing reports for public review. The proposed measure authorizes the City Clerk to change those procedures if (1) the voting equipment will not feasibly accommodate the voting procedures, or (2) the Secretary of State changes its current RCV guidelines and adopts new guidelines that can be accommodated by the voting equipment.

A “Yes” vote is in favor of adopting the measure and transitioning to RCV elections after January 1, 2028, if the specified technical and financial conditions are met.

A “No” vote is against adopting the measure.

If a majority of voters vote “Yes,” then this measure will take effect ten (10) days after election results are declared by the City Council.

Dated: July 27, 2026

s/ Jeffrey Melching, City Attorney

The above statement is an impartial analysis of the measure. If you would like to read the full text of the proposed measure, you may find it on the City’s website at cityofirvine.gov/election, or call the City Clerk at (949) 724-6205 and a copy will be sent at no cost to you.



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Argument in Favor of Measure D

Vote YES on Measure D to Bring Fairer Elections to Irvine

Shouldn't "majority rule" govern our elections? Yet in Irvine, candidates are regularly elected with less than one-third of the vote. Which means two-thirds of voters are represented by someone they don't want. That is NOT real democracy.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) guarantees that Irvine residents elect officeholders who **win majority support**. And it's cost-effective. THIS is what *real* democracy looks like.

Why Irvine Needs Measure D:

- **Guarantees Majority Support:** RCV acts as an "instant runoff." Voters rank their favorite candidates in order of preference: 1, 2, 3, and so on. If no candidate receives over 50% of first-choice rankings, the last-place candidate is eliminated, and their votes transfer to each voter's second choice. This continues until a candidate wins a majority.
- **More Choice, More Voice:** Never again will you have to vote for the "lesser evil." RCV allows you to vote for your favorite candidate first, knowing your vote will still count toward your backup choice if your first choice loses.
- **Rewards Positive, Solution-Focused Campaigns:** Because candidates often need second and third choice rankings to win, negative campaigning backfires. Instead, RCV incentivizes positive, issue-oriented campaigns that unite rather than divide the community.
- **Protects Taxpayers:** This measure ensures fiscal accountability with a strict safeguard: RCV will only be implemented if the cost is below 0.23% of the city's budget. This responsibly modernizes our democracy while protecting your tax dollars.

Irvine deserves a democracy where the majority rules, candidates focus on solutions rather than negative attacks, and voters don't have to settle for the "lesser evil." Measure D delivers exactly that. Join dozens of cities in California and across the US using RCV. **More choice and a stronger voice! Vote YES on D.**

Learn more at VoterChoiceIrvine.org

s/ Kathleen Treseder
Councilmember

Rebuttal to Argument in Favor of Measure D

THE "SPENDING CAP" IS A SHAM. The number moves around — it's a percentage of the city's massive general fund, and could eventually rise to \$1.5 million, \$2 million or more. We don't know. We're just guesstimating. And the only cost estimates come from the group pushing you to vote yes. Irvine can't afford that kind of surprise: the city faces a \$6 million deficit this year and a \$47 million shortfall ahead.

NO OTHER CITY IN ORANGE COUNTY USES THIS TODAY. The Orange County Registrar admits in writing that it has no certified system for implementing ranked-choice voting — that's why no infrastructure exists, and Irvine would bear the massive startup costs.

NOT BROKEN. NOT NEEDED. Irvine has never held a runoff election. This "fix" solves a problem we don't have.

"DOZENS OF CITIES"? LOOK WHAT HAPPENED THERE. Implementation problems have surfaced across the country — including in Oakland, one of the flagship cities RCV advocates point to as proof it works. In 2022, a misconfigured algorithm led Alameda County to certify the wrong winner in an Oakland school board race. The certified winner was declared the loser weeks later, once the error was corrected. New York's 2021 mayoral primary saw the same kind of chaos, when 135,000 test ballots were mistakenly counted.

Our elections work now. Implementing this will be very expensive. And it has had some serious problems in some places where it has been tried.

VOTE NO on Measure D.

s/James Mai
Vice Mayor



Argument Against Measure D

Irvine is facing a serious budget crisis. The city is projecting a structural deficit that could reach **\$47 MILLION BY 2030**. Leaders are already cutting services, raiding reserve funds, and debating new fees on residents just to keep basic city operations running. Some council members are already talking about a tax increase to plug the gap.

A council majority put this experiment on the ballot with no idea what it will cost.

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THIS WILL COST. The Orange County Registrar of Voters has confirmed he does not have a state-certified system capable of running a ranked-choice election. He cannot say what it would cost or how long. The city's estimates came not from the Registrar — but from ranked-choice voting advocacy groups. Those estimates already top \$750,000 — before voter education, before county system upgrades, before anything goes wrong.

OUR ELECTIONS AREN'T BROKEN. Cities that adopted ranked-choice voting did so to eliminate expensive runoff elections. **IRVINE DOES NOT HOLD RUNOFF ELECTIONS.** We don't have the problem this is supposed to solve.

NO OTHER CITY IN ORANGE COUNTY DOES THIS. Not one. Every first-adopter cost falls on Irvine taxpayers — at the worst possible moment. RCV is banned in 19 states. Why?

RESULTS COULD BE DELAYED FOR WEEKS. Ranked-choice voting adds multiple elimination rounds after ballots are counted. Irvine voters could wait weeks to learn who won their own city council race.

AND THE CANDIDATE WITH THE MOST VOTES CAN STILL LOSE — after later rounds reshuffle the outcome. That is not more democracy. That is more confusion.

When your city is talking about raising taxes to close a **\$47 MILLION** budget hole, this is not the time for a costly experiment nobody asked for.

VOTE NO ON CHANGING TO RANKED CHOICE VOTING.

s/ James Mai
Vice Mayor

Rebuttal to Argument Against Measure D

Don't be misled by false claims and misinformation. Why would Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) be *used by 17 million voters* in cities across California and the US if it was so expensive to implement? RCV will give Irvine voters **more choice, stronger local representation, and true majority rule.**

Vote YES on Measure D because:

- **Exaggerated Cost Claims:** Implementation costs are minimal — no other city adopting Ranked Choice Voting has spent that much money.
- **Strict Cost Limits:** Measure D includes a **hard spending limit of 0.23% of the city budget, fully protecting taxpayers.** RCV will **only** be used if the cost is less than 0.23% of the budget...*It's that simple.*
- **Sensible Timeline:** Implementation is scheduled after January 1, 2028, giving election officials *ample time* to certify equipment and conduct thorough voter education.
- **Majority Should Rule:** In Irvine, unpopular candidates can win with just a small fraction of the vote. RCV solves this problem. **With RCV, candidates need to earn over 50% popular support to win.**
- **Instantaneous Results:** RCV will not cause additional delays; once ballots are collected, the voting equipment *counts in an eyeblink.*
- **Simple as 1-2-3:** Just rank your favorite candidates in order of preference. If your top choice is eliminated, your vote automatically counts for your next choice, making sure **your vote is never wasted.**

Ranked Choice Voting will support a stronger, more representative local government and put power back in the hands of Irvine voters, where it belongs.

VOTE YES on Measure D.

Learn more at VoterChoiceIrvine.org

s/ Kathleen Treseder
Councilmember