

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 2/3/2025
TO: HRC
FROM: Law Department
SUBJECT: Ranked Choice Voting



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The Law Department was asked to draft legislation to move the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) to a ranked choice voting system (RCV).

In 2020, Alaskan voters approved an initiative which moved all state elections to a ranked choice voting system. In 2024, Alaskans rejected an initiative to repeal ranked choice voting. As of today's date, two new state initiatives to repeal ranked choice voting have been filed with the State Division of Elections. Should these initiatives gain the necessary signatures, voters will be asked again whether they would like to repeal ranked choice voting in the 2026 state election. No matter what happens at the state level, CBJ may set its election process for local races.

Data from the Division of Elections show that Juneau voters overwhelmingly supported ranked choice voting. While at the state level Ballot Measure 2 (repeal RCV) showed a final margin of 49.88% yes to 50.12% no, separated by just 743 votes, at the local level the numbers were quite different.¹ For District 3 (Juneau only) the margin was 39.0% yes to 61.0% no, and for District 4 it was 25.7% yes to 74.3% no.²

Currently CBJ uses two types of voting systems. The first, for single winner races, is referred to as "first past the post." The second, for races with multiple winners (for example, races which state "vote for no more than 2"), is referred to as "block voting." CBJ Charter sets out that the city will have both regular and special elections, and that election processes will be set out via ordinance (Charter Article 6). CBJ Code Title 29 sets forth the process of elections.

The attached ordinance matches State law with slight adjustments for CBJ code. We have also included three sample ballots. The first is a ballot from 2021, the second is a ballot using RCV for all races, the third is a ballot that uses a combination of RCV and block voting.

Several decision points need to be made:

- (1) Do you want to shift to ranked choice voting?
- (2) If so, do you:
 - a. Want to use RCV voting for single member races and block voting for multimember races? or
 - b. Do you want to move to RCV in all races?

Things to keep in mind when making these decisions are:

- There is a benefit to having all races handled in a consistent manner; and
- Block voting has historically been where we see confusion by voters and rejected votes; but
- Moving to single member races for all races represents a change for school board and early-term assembly vacancy races.

¹ <https://www.juneauempire.com/news/recount-of-ranked-choice-repeal-upholds-voters-rejection-and-increases-margin-by-six-votes/>

² <https://www.elections.alaska.gov/results/24GENR/map/>