What is Instant Runoff Voting?

Also known as *preference voting*, IRV is a very simple reform that **makes elections fairer**, **reduces negative campaigning,** allows voters to more freely **support their favorite candidates**, and ensures that the **winner has broad support**. It can be applied to any election in which there may be more than one choice on the ballot. Each voter may, if they choose to, vote for more than one candidate, in order of preference. Mark **1** for your 1st choice, **2** for your 2nd choice, and so on.

If no candidate receives more than 50% of first choice votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is dropped, and the #2 votes on those ballots are counted. This repeats until one candidate has more than 50% of the vote.

For US Representative
George A. Bachrach
2 Michael E. Capuano
Marjorie O'Neill Clapprood
Raymond L. Flynn
Christopher F. Gabrieli
Thomas M. Keane Jr.
3 John T. O'Connor
Alex Rodriguez
1 Susan M. Tracy
Charles Yancey

How does it help?

- Candidates with little support will no longer win elections

- Voters can choose the candidates they want,
  rather than trying to guess which candidate other voters prefer

- Candidates competing for the same voters will have an incentive
  to be friendly towards each other, rather than attacking each other

- Supporters and volunteers can work for their favorite candidate without
  worrying that they might be indirectly helping a candidate they oppose

Q. How does it reduce negative campaigning?
A. Under today's system, when two candidates are targeting the same group voters, any vote for one candidate is a vote lost to the other candidate. Even if the community they're targeting is a majority in the district, the candidates may *split the vote* from that community and allow another candidate to win. With IRV, *there is no splitting of the vote*. Voters from the targeted community can vote for both candidates. The candidate with the most first-choice support will win.

Q. I saw a flyer that explains how sometimes, with IRV, voters help their least favorite candidate.
A. Those flyers misrepresent IRV. They presume that every voter must rank all candidates in order, from favorite to least favorite. In that system, voters end up voting for candidates *they don't like at all*. In some unusual cases, it is true that their 3rd or 4th choice votes end up tilting the race in favor of those candidates. The solution is simple: Don't vote for everyone. *Only vote for the candidates you like.*

Q. Is this the voting system used in Cambridge City Council elections?
A. IRV is very simple and can be used in many different kinds of elections. It can be used in nonpartisan proportional representation elections like in Cambridge. It can also be used in much simpler, traditional "winner takes all" elections. *You do not need to have Cambridge-style elections to use IRV.*

How would it work?

Let's take a typical example - a Democratic primary for a state representative seat in a liberal leaning district. A very conservative candidate (we'll call him *Golden*) faces a candidate whose views are in line with the district (we'll call him *Moran*):

    68% - Michael Moran
    32% - Brian Golden

So far so good. But it probably wouldn't work this way. This is an open seat, and as with most legislative seats in Massachusetts, everyone knows that the Democratic nominee will win. So, several other candidates compete in the primary.
Because of the district's liberal lean:
 - No other conservatives enter the race
 - The more liberal candidates perform better, splitting the vote

In the real race, the results look more like this:

    29% - Brian Golden
    27% - Michael Moran
    26% - Gilbert Hoy   (Actual results, 1998 Democratic Primary, 18th Suffolk district, Allston-Brighton)
    13% - Nadine Stein
     4% - Duffy

The result? Using the current voting system, a staunch conservative becomes the district's Representative, even though fewer than 1/3 of the voters support him!

What if we used Instant Runoff Voting (aka "preference voting")?
Stein and Duffy would be eliminated in the first two "rounds", sending their votes to voters' second choices. If most Duffy voters preferred Hoy as a second choice, and most Stein voters preferred Moran, the next round might look like this: Golden: 31%; Moran: 42%; Hoy: 29%. At this round, Hoy would be eliminated. Hoy is a liberal, and most of the people who voted for him would list Moran, not Golden, on their ballot. The result:

    68% - Michael Moran
    32% - Brian Golden

What if most of Stein and Duffy's voters preferred Hoy over Moran as their #2 choice? The third round might be, Golden: 31%; Moran: 29%; Hoy: 42%. Most of Moran's voters prefer Hoy over Golden, so when Moran is eliminated, the final result would be:

    68% - Gilbert Hoy
    32% - Brian Golden

The voters of the district get a Representative they support!

To learn more, visit: **www.massirv.org**