

[News Article](#) in *Wall Street Journal*, October 21

Ranked Choice Voting in San Francisco

San Francisco has used ranked-choice voting in several elections since residents approved it nine years ago, but this is its first competitive mayoral race under the system, and it comes as debate over ranked choice heats up. Proponents of ranked-choice voting say it leads to more civility in races, as candidates seek to avoid alienating people who prefer another candidate but might list them as an alternate. It also helps cities avoid the expense and hassle of holding a runoff election if no one wins half of overall votes—a ballot that would cost San Francisco \$2.5 million to \$3 million, according to Director of Elections John Arntz.

“Would San Francisco really be better off with a divisive mayoral runoff that cost the city millions of dollars and exacerbated the role of money in politics?” said Rob Richie, executive director of FairVote, a nonprofit group in Takoma Park, Md., that advocates for the method. “We don’t think so.”

2011 Writings & Quotes

Featuring FairVote and

Our Reform Vision

[Op-Ed](#) in *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 25th

Chair Krist Novoselic and Director Rob Richie: Time to Replace Winner-Take-All Elections

With the federal government near default and all sense of civility lost in Congress and many state legislatures, winner-take-democracy has reached a breaking point. It’s time to move to proportional voting to allow us to hold party leaders more accountable and create new incentives for cooperation... We all pay taxes and are subject to the laws of government, so it’s only fair that the political majority *and* minority share the power to elect representatives. Proportional voting takes power away from the political cartographers and gives it to voters. It is a means to get outside of the zero-sum, winner-take-all game that plagues our elections and legislative processes.

[Op-Ed](#) in *Christian Science Monitor*, September 1

John B. Anderson on Voter Choice Reforms

Reforming winner-takes-all elections for state legislatures and Congress may be a greater challenge than upholding majority rule with runoff systems in presidential elections, but doing so is a pre-condition

for giving all voters real choices and new voices... These reforms would make the two-party system more accountable, while allowing voters the choices they want. New technologies make them easy to implement, and their growing use in local elections demonstrates that we can make them work. Even if they won’t be in place nationally by 2012, the only real barriers are a failure of political imagination and fear of change.

I see the coming decade as one of major reforms, ranging from establishing a national popular vote for president, weakening the influence of special interest money in politics, and ensuring every young American is registered to vote when reaching voting age.

[News Article](#) in *Bangor Daily News*, November 9

Dorothy Scheeline’s RCV Educational Work

Dorothy Scheeline, a representative of ranked choice voting advocate FairVote, was at [Portland] City Hall all day offering to answer questions about the process as posed by members of the public... Last week Scheeline

conducted a one-day survey of Portland absentee voters, the results of which found Portlanders largely found the ranked choice ballot easy.

[News Article](#) in *Roll Call*, December 8

National Popular Vote Plan in the Spotlight

Advocates of what’s known as the National Popular Vote Compact say they have 49 percent of the 270 electoral votes they would need to change the way the president is elected. The movement’s leading backers are National Popular Vote and FairVote, a government watchdog group that promotes election equity across the board... “This is, to me, a nonpartisan issue,” said GOP Committeeman Saul Anuzis, former chairman of the Michigan GOP and a consultant to National Popular Vote. “It’s a question of what is the right way to elect a president. In every other office in the land, we elect the person who gets the most votes, from dog catcher to governor.”

Public polling shows strong majorities on both sides of the aisle back replacing the Electoral College with a national popular vote system, FairVote Executive Director Rob Richie said.

(Continued on other side)

[News Article](#) in *The Economist*, October 22

Overview of Ranked Choice Voting in USA

Ranked choice voting is not new. [It] is used from Australia to Ireland. London's mayor is chosen that way, and Britons this year considered, but decided against, using it for parliamentary elections. But in America only a few cities, from Massachusetts to Minnesota, have toyed with the idea. For most Americans, the method remains an eccentricity used only for the Oscars... That may be about to change. Next month Portland, Maine, will have its first ranked-choice mayoral election. More notably, San Francisco, which adopted the system back in 2004, will hold its first mayoral election in which the system is likely to decide the winner (since the victor last time ran almost unopposed). Three of its neighbors—Oakland, Berkeley and San Leandro—have recently adopted it.

[Editorial](#) in *Portland Press-Herald*, November 13

Ranked Choice Voting a Winner in Portland

The results are in and Michael Brennan is not the only winner in Portland's mayoral election: The other is ranked-choice voting... Portland had a better than 40 percent turnout, sky-high for an off-year municipal election, far exceeding the 25 percent turnout predicted by the City Clerk's Office... Without ranked-choice voting this would have been a very different campaign. If they were just seeking to have the most votes on Election Night, the candidates would have targeted a number of voters, identified their supporters and made sure they turned out to the polls. In this case, about 5,000 votes from nearly 20,000 cast would have been enough. A candidate with a hot-button neighborhood issue could have run away with the election without ever meeting a voter from another part of town. Under the ranked-choice system, candidates were forced to engage with each other and talk to each other's voters.

The result was an interesting conversation about Portland and its future that would not have happened in a "turn-out-your-base" election. That debate helped clarify the job description for Portland's mayor, and it will make life easier for Brennan when he shows up for work. Portland residents can be confident that they have a political leader chosen by a majority vote who will represent all of them... They can be confident that the process worked.

[Op-Ed](#) in *Baltimore Sun*, November 7

Jamie Raskin & Rob Richie on Fair Voting

The battle over legislative redistricting in Maryland provides only the latest evidence of the failure of winner-take-all congressional elections... Single-member districts are a standing invitation to computer-facilitated partisan gerrymandering, a process that has turned ferocious all over America. It's time to look for a better way, grounded in our electoral traditions: proportional representation in a fair voting system where most voters can elect a candidate... To establish our plan, Congress would need to return to states the power we once had to use fair voting—ideally by passing a law establishing independent redistricting for all states that could move to super-districts.

[News Article](#) in *Wall Street Journal*, May 14

Analysis of Math of Ranked Choice Voting

In instant runoff elections, candidates are ranked by preference, allowing voters to have a say in the electoral outcome even if their top choice doesn't have a shot at winning. (Think Ralph Nader supporters who nevertheless preferred to see Al Gore win over George W. Bush in 2000)... Prof. [Steven] Brams and instant runoff's leading advocate—Rob Richie, executive director of the nonprofit advocacy group FairVote—have been debating the merits of alternative voting systems for decades... Richie, who has advised cities on adopting the instant runoff, says the system is practical. "I'm interested in talking about reform and changing politics, not winning the math debate."

[Op-Eds](#) in *Politico*, August 18 & *The Nation*, Oct. 22

Rob Richie Argues for National Popular Vote

The national popular vote plan is the fairest way for states to reform winner-take-all rules. It's now up to state lawmakers to act and guarantee every American an equal vote in electing their president. — *Politico*

Both parties would gain by having new incentives to make Howard Dean's fifty-state strategy real while doing what a majority of Americans want and what represents the best definition of what democracy should be: ensuring that every vote in every corner of the nation would matter in every election, for the first time in American history. — *The Nation*