

THE FACTS ON: Ranked Choice Voting in New Jersey

What is Ranked Choice voting? Ranked choice voting means voters rank candidates by preference and their ballots are counted in rounds until a candidate receives a 50%+ majority of votes. The first round tallies the votes for each candidate by first-choice selections. If no majority winner emerges, the candidate receiving the lowest votes in that round is eliminated and the second-choice selections from their voters are applied to the remainder of candidates. These instant runoffs continue until a candidate with a 50%+ majority of votes emerges.

What election method does New Jersey currently use? New Jersey currently uses a single-winner voting method. Voters may only cast one vote per office and do not express a preference on the remaining candidates.

What would a ranked choice ballot look like? Sample of a Completed Ranked Choice Ballot*

Rank up to six candidates. Mark no more than one oval in each column	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	Fifth Choice	Sixth Choice
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Andrea Anderson <i>A Party</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bill Billings <i>B Party</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Carrie Carrington <i>C Party</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Dennis Dennings <i>D Party</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eric Ericsson <i>E Party</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in Candidate: <i>Frank Franklin</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**This sample is for illustrative purposes ONLY; it is not an actual ballot. Names on the ballot are fictional.*

PROS OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING

- Eliminates costly runoff elections
- Encourages voters who are dissuaded from voting by having to pick from the “lesser of two evils”
- Penalizes negative campaigning since candidates need to compete for all voters
- Leads to more issues-based candidates

CONS OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING

- May require costly upgrades or replacements of voting machines
- Requires voter education on new format
- Minimizes the importance of political party endorsement
- Will potentially result in more election ads

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can you still only vote for one candidate if you want to? Yes, that candidate will count as your first and only rank.

Do ranked choice elections work for both primary and general elections? Yes, it can and has been used for both.

Do any other states currently use ranked choice voting? Yes: Alaska will use it for all future elections, including the presidential election in 2024; Maine has used it since 2018 in all primary elections and general elections for Congress, and will use it for the presidential election in 2024; and Nevada, Hawaii, Kansas and Wyoming used it for their Democratic primaries in 2020.

Is there current legislation for ranked choice voting pending in New Jersey? Yes, NJ Assembly and Senate bills were introduced this session to adopt ranked voting (A1200/S1820). In past legislative sessions, similar bills have been introduced as well as bills for studies on the feasibility of ranked choice voting, but none ever moved beyond committee.

What groups are working for ranked choice voting implementation in New Jersey? [Fairvote.org](https://www.fairvote.org) and [Represent.us](https://www.represent.us)

Created by the Social Action Committee of The Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. Last Updated April 2021.

Sources: https://www.fairvote.org/rcv#how_rcv_works; https://www.nileg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/S2000/1820_I1.HTM; <https://www.nj.com/opinion/2019/11/the-most-popular-candidate-should-win-right-heres-how-to-make-that-happen-in-nj-lawmaker-says.html>; <https://newbrunswicktoday.com/2021/01/26/ranked-choice-voting-provides-alternative-to-runoff-elections/>