

REPRESENTATIVE JUSTIN PARISH

Alaska State Legislature / Juneau, Alaska District 34



Sponsor Statement

HB 390 – RANKED-CHOICE PRIMARY ELECTIONS

House Bill 390 establishes ranked-choice voting (RCV) as the method used in Alaska elections. It would be used for the primary, general, and special elections of state legislatures and U.S. Congress. The governor and lieutenant governor races would use RCV only in the primary election and not the general election to not conflict with Article III Section 3 of the Alaska Constitution.

Ranked-choice voting, also referred to as instant-runoff voting or preferential voting, is a method where voters rank the candidates in the order of their choice. A voter ranks each candidate as first choice, second choice, and so on. The first candidate to receive over half the votes is immediately declared the winner.

If no candidate receives more than half the votes, the one with the least first choice votes gets eliminated. The second-choice candidate from an eliminated ballot becomes the new first choice candidate and is redistributed to them. This instant run-off process continues until a candidate has more than half the votes and is declared the winner.

Ranked-choice voting gives voters a stronger voice. A person votes for the candidate they believe best represents their values. They do not have to feel their vote is 'wasted' if the candidate is unlikely to win. The candidate with the most votes and broadest support wins.

It creates collaboration and less polarization among the people and those elected. Today we see significant partisan rigidity among voters and elected officials. RCV encourages more candidates to run for office since they aren't splitting the vote. Candidates have an incentive to appeal to another candidate's voter base for their second-choice vote and not invoke hostility through negative campaigning.

Eleven municipalities around the country currently use RCV including Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Maine; and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In June 2018, Maine will be the first state in the U.S. to use RCV during the primaries for all the state, U.S. Senate and U.S. House elections.