

# 2022 Elections Recap for Senate State Affairs

January 24, 2022

# What changed in 2022?

All statewide elections now follow the same, two-step process:

STEP 1: Nonpartisan “final four” Primary.

STEP 2: Ranked Choice Voting General Election.



# STEP 1: Nonpartisan “Final Four” Primary

## PROCESS:

- All candidates appear on the same ballot and voters pick their favorite in each race.  
*(like the previous Open Primary)*
- All voters get the same choices, regardless of party registration.  
*(like the previous Open Primary)*
- The top four vote-getters move on to the general election, regardless of party.

# STEP 1: Nonpartisan “Final Four” Primary

## BENEFITS:

- All voters have access to all candidates in the publicly funded primary; no more choosing a ballot and limiting choices.
- The most competitive candidates proceed to the General Election.
- Less of a barrier to entry to Alaska’s citizen legislature.
- All candidates, including independents, start on a level playing field.

# STEP 2: Ranked Choice Voting General

## PROCESS:

- Voters rank candidates in order of preference.
- If a candidate receives a majority (50%+1 vote) of first-choice votes, they win.
- If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and voters that ranked that candidate as their 1st choice have their vote counted for their next choice.
- This process continues until two candidates are left and the one with the most votes wins.

# STEP 2: Ranked Choice Voting General

## BENEFITS:

- Voters can express their preference of all candidates.
- A candidate needs a majority to win.
  - ✓ Encourages candidates to appeal to a larger percentage of their constituency.
  - ✓ Elects representatives that are more accountable to their constituents.
- Allows Alaskans to vote their heart without fear of vote-splitting and contributing to their least favorite candidate getting elected.

# 2022 Alaska Elections (*expectation*)

Education and Implementation

January

August

November

First Nonpartisan  
Primary

First Ranked  
Choice Voting  
General

# 2022 Alaska Elections (*reality*)

Implementation

Education

January

June

August

November

Special Nonpartisan Primary  
*(first statewide vote by mail election)*

Nonpartisan Primary  
+  
First Ranked Choice  
Voting General

Ranked Choice  
Voting General



# Alaskans Understand RCV

Despite the challenges and the shortened education/implementation timeline, in the first RCV election in August:

- 99.8% of ballots were correctly filled out.
- 73% of voters ranked at least two candidates.
- In exit polling of primary voters:
  - ✓ 95% had received instructions on RCV.
  - ✓ 85% stated it was “simple.”
  - ✓ 62% supported the open primary.
- Turnout was the highest in a primary since PFD Voter Registration was established.

# Alaskans Understand RCV

In the November election:

- On average, 99.9% of ballots were correctly filled out, which is on par with traditional, single-choice elections.
- Multiple races and data points showed that voters had a good understanding of RCV. Voters were more likely to rank:
  - ✓ In competitive races;
  - ✓ In races with multiple candidates; and
  - ✓ When their first choice wasn't favored to win.

# 2022 Alaska Elections – Successes

- More choice for voters:
  - ✓ A larger, more diverse candidate pool and more candidates from historically underrepresented groups.
  - ✓ Candidates mirrored Alaska: the 48 candidates in the special primary represented a broad range of political ideologies from every corner of Alaska.
- RCV didn't favor one party over another: in the three statewide races, incumbents were favored but the winners represented different points on the political spectrum.

# 2022 Alaska Elections – Successes

- More competition overall:
  - ✓ Voters polled thought races were more competitive.
  - ✓ Competitive races moved to the General, where more voters participate.
- Vote splitting was prevented and candidates had majority support: The three “come from behind” victories show that the system works.
- Alaskan voters are complex and independent. The system allows them to express that complexity.

# 2022 Alaska Elections – Lessons Learned

- Align the special election replacement timeline with DOE withdrawal deadlines.
- Need to research why ballots weren't counted and continue to find solutions:
  - ✓ Witness/signature errors invalidated thousands of absentee and special needs ballots.
  - ✓ Hundreds of ballots from rural villages were not received by the deadline and were not fully counted.
  - ✓ Ballot tracking and curing processes.



**Questions?**

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