

RANKED CHOICE VOTING TOOLKIT



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS*
OF MAINE



RANKED CHOICE VOTING TOOLKIT

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WHEN DOES MAINE VOTE USING RANKED CHOICE VOTING?

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All Mainers use Ranked Choice Voting in **primary** and **general** elections for:

U.S. President
U.S. Senate
U.S. House

All Mainers also use Ranked Choice Voting in **primary** elections for:

Governor
Maine Legislature



Portland and Westbrook voters, additionally, use Ranked Choice Voting in **general** elections for:

Local offices
(Mayoral, City Council, and School Committee races)

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the use of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) has begun to spread across Maine. Ten years ago, RCV was only used in Portland mayoral elections. Now, it is used in all Maine state primaries, all Maine federal elections, Portland council and school board races, and Westbrook mayor, council, and school board races.

RCV continues to grow in Maine, and advocating its use for local office is one of the most promising ways to encourage future expansion. In Portland and Westbrook, citizens who were passionate about bringing RCV to their communities led the effort to make RCV a reality.

This guide is a resource to explain what it takes to bring RCV to your community. It describes the mechanics of how RCV works, what to consider before starting a proposal for local RCV, how to get local RCV on the ballot, and how to win a ballot campaign for local RCV.



Have any questions about bringing RCV to your community?

We're here to help. Send us a message at info@lwvme.org.

EXPLAINING RANKED CHOICE VOTING AND ITS VARIATIONS



① RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN SINGLE-WINNER ELECTIONS



One candidate receives the majority of support from voters.

In **single-winner elections***, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is an election method that ensures the winner of an election is the candidate who receives a majority of support from voters. Ranked Choice Voting tabulates this majority support through a process that's also referred to as "**instant run-off**." Voters rank multiple candidates in order of preference. If no candidate receives a majority of first choice votes, the candidate with the fewest first choice votes is eliminated, and those votes are redistributed to the voters' second choices. This process repeats until a majority winner emerges.

Ranked Choice Voting compares favorably with **traditional run-off elections**, a voting method where, if no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a second election is held between the two candidates who received the most votes in that first election. Conducting a second election is not only costly and logistically demanding, but it is also likely to result in lower voter turnout ([Primary Runoff Elections](#) and [Runoff Elections](#)).

With Ranked Choice Voting, instead of holding a second election, all the input needed from voters to calculate the run-off result is collected by ranking the candidates on a single ballot.

*We sometimes refer to RCV in "single-winner" elections to specify elections where only one candidate is being elected in each race; see the next section for discussions of elections with multiple winners.

① WORD RECAP

Single-winner elections — A RCV election where a single candidate receives a majority of support from voters.

Instant run-off election — Also known as RCV.

Traditional run-off election — If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a second election is held between the two candidates who received the most votes in that first election.

Ranked Choice Voting compares favorably with **plurality voting** as well. Plurality voting is a voting method where the candidate who receives the most votes wins the election, regardless of whether or not they received a majority of votes. Whenever three or more candidates are running in an election, there is the possibility with plurality voting that the winner could receive less than half the votes — that a majority of voters preferred someone else. Plurality

voting can result in a winning candidate whose political ideology is opposed by the majority of voters. For example, a majority of voters could be conservative, but because they split their votes between a Libertarian and a Republican candidate, a Democratic candidate could win the election. Thus, plurality voting can result in electoral outcomes that are not representative of the will of a majority of voters.

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Candidate One	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidate Two	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidate Three	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

SAMPLE BALLOT

On a RCV ballot voters rank their preferred candidate as their first choice. Voters marks the candidates in order of preference. Voters may mark as many candidates as they would like.

Ranked Choice Voting + Maine

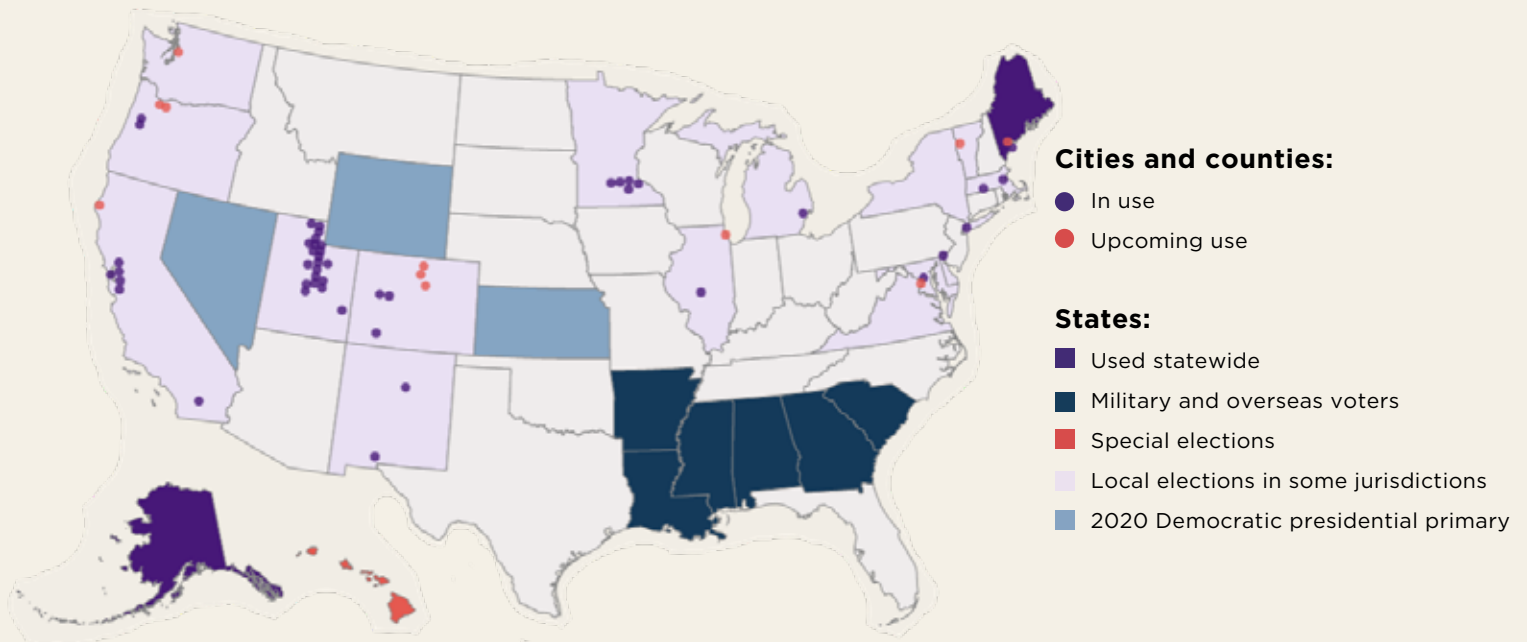
Mainers are familiar with Ranked Choice Voting since we have used it for state primary and federal elections since 2018. This familiarity brings both positives and negatives to campaigning for Ranked Choice Voting at the local level. On the one hand, Maine voters are already educated on how RCV works and have experience voting on ballots with a Ranked Choice Voting format. On the other hand, a reactionary opposition to RCV was mobilized during the campaign to adopt RCV at the state level, and that opposition managed to persuade many voters of their anti-RCV messaging.

WORD RECAP

Plurality voting — A voting method where the candidate who receives the most votes wins the election, regardless of whether or not they received a majority of votes.

WHO ELSE USES RANKED CHOICE VOTING?

As of December 2022, 63 American jurisdictions have RCV in place, reaching approximately 13 million voters. This includes 2 states, 2 counties, and 59 cities. Military and overseas voters cast RCV ballots in federal runoff elections in 6 states.



This map is from FairVote.org.

Ranked Choice Voting + Everywhere Else

In Maine, support or opposition to RCV is often portrayed as a partisan issue. But Ranked Choice Voting as a voting method does not inherently favor any particular political party. In other cities and states, narratives around partisanship and RCV support are different. Republicans in Utah are championing RCV. When RCV was first introduced in San Francisco, it was Democrats who opposed it. Perhaps adopting it in local elections, some of which are nonpartisan (i.e. no

party affiliation listed next to candidates on the ballot), and which often do not involve as contentious or overtly partisan campaigning as larger races, could demonstrate the usefulness of this voting method to even some skeptical voters. Perhaps adoption of RCV for local elections could begin to break down the power of the opposition narrative about this voting method in Maine.



Several candidates receive sufficient support from voters.

Municipalities in Maine have a variety of multi-member governing bodies, like select boards, city councils, town councils, directly elected committees (like a planning committee), and school boards or school committees. Sometimes, voters elect members to these bodies in staggered terms; sometimes they elect members that represent specific districts within the municipality. And sometimes they elect more than one member at once (at-large or in a multi-member district), in a “vote-for-N” election (where “N” is the number of open seats).

It is possible to elect members to these municipal bodies through Ranked Choice Voting, even when electing more than one member at once, using a **multi-winner Ranked Choice Voting method**. For example, you could fill three at-large seats on your select board at the same time with multi-winner RCV.

Proportional Representation

Multi-winner RCV is designed to result in a proportional outcome; that is, if there are 5 seats and one-fifth of the voters are conservative, a proportional outcome would be for a conservative candidate to win one out of the 5 seats. The multi-member governing body would thus reflect the political preferences of its constituency; this concept is called **proportional representation**. This voting method is often referred to as proportional Ranked Choice Voting (pRCV).

HOW THE BALLOTS DIFFER

In a multi-winner election, voters will need to mark the number of preferred candidates based on how many open seats there are in the race. If there are two open seats, voters should mark at least their top two choices.

i WORD RECAP

Multi-winner elections — An election where candidates run to fill multiple open seats on the same ballot.

Proportional representation — A multi-winner RCV election where the outcome is proportional. The candidates who win the seats proportionally represent the political spectrum of the voters.

YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT



① FEASIBILITY OF ADOPTING RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY

This section outlines several important factors to consider in determining the feasibility of campaigning for and implementing Ranked Choice Voting for your local elections.

First, let's consider the election rules for charter and non-charter municipalities. A charter is like the constitution for your town. Which applies to your municipality?

➔ **Charter Towns:** Municipalities with charters can amend their charters to adopt RCV for local elections.

➔ **Non-charter Towns:** municipalities without charters must use plurality vote “unless otherwise provided for at a municipal meeting at least 180 days before the election.” In order to institute RCV, non-charter towns must include a measure on their Town Meeting warrant to change the election method.

For more information on how to get local RCV on the ballot in these municipalities, see the section “Getting on the Ballot” (page 16).

An Act To Give Municipalities More Options in Municipal Elections

Previously, Maine state statute mandated that municipalities without charters elect their local officials by plurality vote, which would have prevented non-charter municipalities from adopting RCV. However, a [bill](#) passed in the 130th Maine Legislature that changed the language of that statute to allow municipalities without charters to adopt alternative voting methods, including RCV. According to the [new language](#), municipalities without charters must use plurality vote “unless otherwise provided for at a municipal meeting at least 180 days before the election.”



Have any questions about implementing RCV? We're here to help. Send us a message at info@lwvme.org.

The feasibility of implementing Ranked Choice Voting in your municipality might depend upon the type of local elections that you have. For example: do you have a mayor and, if so, are they elected by the voters? Implementing Ranked Choice Voting for a single-winner election is easier to explain to voters, since they have already experienced single-winner RCV for some state elections. Explaining the logistics for a multi-winner RCV election to voters may require additional voter education and outreach efforts.

While a mayoral election might be the easiest one for which to advocate adopting Ranked Choice Voting, it remains possible to adopt Ranked Choice Voting for other local elections. Consider how your **select board**, **town council**, or **city council** are elected: are multiple members elected at once, necessitating multi-winner RCV, or are your officials elected individually by district, or in staggered terms, in which case you could still utilize single-winner RCV? What other municipal officials, such as election warden, are elected by voters and, again, are multiple officials elected at once for the entire municipality, or are they elected by district or in staggered terms?

Finally, consider your **school board** or **school committee**. Does your municipality have its own school district or are you part of a district that includes multiple municipalities? If multiple municipalities are included, does your municipality have at least one designated representative on the board? Does your municipality have authority over how you conduct the election for that representative? The answers to these questions can help you determine whether your municipality could adopt Ranked Choice Voting for any or all of its school board or school council members, and whether that election would take the form of single-winner RCV or multi-winner RCV.

Although your ultimate goal might be to adopt RCV for all local elections, you might choose to start with just some of your elections, such as the ones with a single winner. Implementing RCV in just one or two elections (1) allows the preferences of all voters to be considered in that election and (2) starts to normalize using RCV in local elections. You can always campaign to expand RCV to more elections in the future.

i WORD RECAP

Select board — A form of local government, but not a legislative body, that serves and provides fiscal management. Members may issue warrants (such as proposals) for residents to vote on during Town Meetings.

Town council — A form of local government that serves the municipality. A council may legislate or allow the town residents to vote on proposals.

City council — A form of local government that serves the municipality. Similar to a town council.

School board/committee — Responsible for overseeing the provision and maintenance of local schools.

3 EXISTING SUPPORT FOR RANKED CHOICE VOTING

One useful factor to consider in determining the feasibility of adopting Ranked Choice Voting in your municipality is to look at whether voters in the municipality supported adopting Ranked Choice Voting at the state level. There have been two ballot questions on this issue: Question 5 in the November 2016 referendum election and Measure 1 in the June 2018 Special Referendum election.

While some voters' opinions about Ranked Choice Voting could have changed since 2016 and 2018, and a number of the voters represented in those election results could have moved in or out of your municipality, these results still provide a useful starting point in determining the potential support for — or opposition to — Ranked Choice Voting in your community.

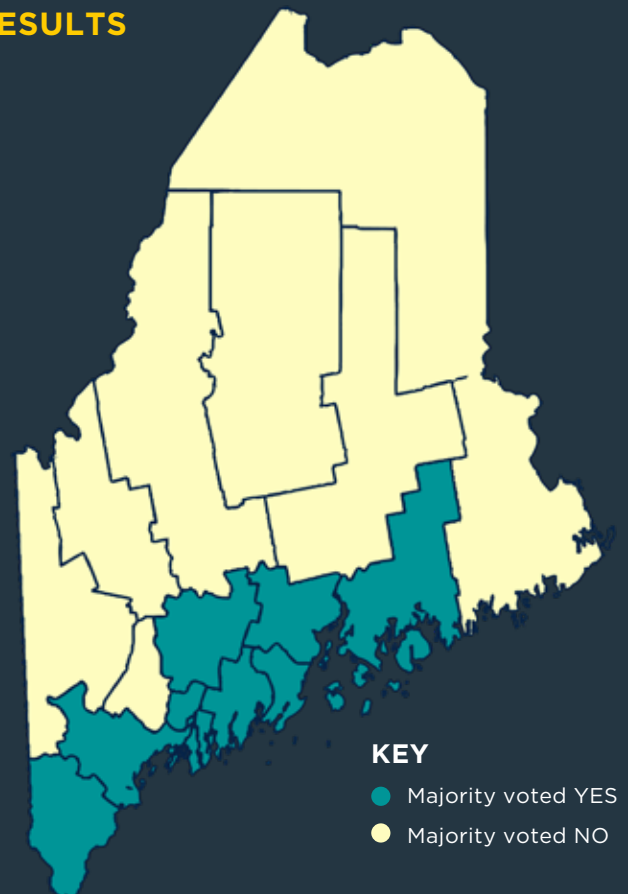
The results of these ballot initiatives are available on the Secretary of State's website under the Election Results webpage: [maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/results/index.html](https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/results/index.html). Election results are listed chronologically, so look for the 2016 November Referendum Election and the 2018 June Special Referendum Election. The results are listed by county and town in a downloadable spreadsheet.

In the 2016 election results spreadsheet, the RCV ballot question is Question 5. In the 2018 election results spreadsheet, the RCV ballot question is Measure 1. For both of these ballot questions, a "Yes" represents support for Ranked Choice Voting and a "No" represents opposition to it. In some municipalities, a majority of voters supported Ranked Choice Voting, and in some municipalities, a majority of voters opposed it. For example, in 2016, 1,950 voters in Ellsworth voted yes on RCV and 2,276 voted no on RCV — a 46% support rate. In Yarmouth, 3,537 voters voted yes and 2,041 voted no — a 63% support rate.

2018 JUNE SPECIAL ELECTION REFERENDUM RESULTS

Voters were asked if they wanted to reject a new law that would delay the use of RCV for any state or federal elections until 2022. A "Yes" vote meant voters supported the use of RCV.

COUNTY	YES VOTE	NO VOTE
ANDROSCOGGIN	8,300	9,408
AROOSTOOK	4,870	5,436
CUMBERLAND	43,741	28,240
FRANKLIN	3,104	3,184
HANCOCK	8,084	5,657
KENNEBEC	13,321	12,548
KNOX	6,066	4,124
LINCOLN	5,322	4,356
OXFORD	5,729	6,124
PENOBSCOT	11,820	13,567
PISCATAQUIS	1,357	1,874
SAGadahoc	4,996	3,985
SOMERSET	3,701	4,830
WALDO	5,238	4,060
WASHINGTON	2,459	2,864
YORK	21,635	18,000
STATE TOTALS	149,900	128,291



4 LOCAL ELECTION CONTEXT

Another factor to consider is the history of elections in your municipality. How competitive are your local elections? Is there usually more than one candidate running for each office or are the elections often uncontested? How do voters feel about the outcomes of recent elections? Intuitively, does it seem that the composition of your council, committee, or board reflects the diverse opinions in your community? Your local election context helps you not only evaluate whether there is an appetite for election reform, including Ranked Choice Voting, but also develop talking points for your campaign.

Compile a list of recent local election results to assess how many of these elections would have utilized RCV runoff tabulation (i.e., how many elections resulted in a winner receiving less than 50% of the votes). The city of Westbrook compiled such information when they were considering a municipal RCV ballot initiative. You can see their chart and analysis of recent election results data on page four of this memo (also pictured below): http://www.westbrookmaine.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_06212021-705.



Past Election Results
The first question to consider is the likelihood and frequency of use for RCV runoff tabulation rounds in future municipal elections, given past election trends. Included below is an outline of past elections, noting where three or more candidates were in a race, which race was affected, and the ranking percentage. I have also added notes indicating whether or not RCV runoff tabulation rounds would have been needed, had RCV been an option at that time.

Note that until recent years, certain At-Large positions had a "vote for two" option; data from elections occurring 2012 or earlier are not included.

Election	Race	#Candidates	1 st Ranking	Notes
11/5/2013	Mayor	3	1 st - 53.2% 2 nd - 34.9% 3 rd - 11.0%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds would not be needed. 1 st place candidate won by 53.2% (more than 50% + 1 vote)
	Council, Ward 4	3	1 st - 48.7% 2 nd - 40.1% 3 rd - 11.1%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds would be needed.
11/14/2015	Council, Ward 3	3	1 st - 64.3% 2 nd - 18.4% 3 rd - 17.3%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds not be needed. 1 st place candidate won by 64.3% (more than 50% + 1 vote)
11/8/2016	Mayor	4	1 st - 35.8% 2 nd - 34.8% 3 rd - 24.3% 4 th - 5.0%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds would be needed.
	Council, At Large	3	1 st - 50.8% 2 nd - 25.3% 3 rd - 24.1%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds would not be needed. 1 st place candidate won by 50.8% (more than 50% + 1 vote)
11/5/2019	Mayor	4	1 st - 30.9% 2 nd - 28.4% 3 rd - 26.8% 4 th - 14.0%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds would be needed.
	Council, At Large	3	1 st - 42.3% 2 nd - 38.9% 3 rd - 18.8%	RCV runoff tabulation rounds would be needed.

If the desire of the Council and voters of Westbrook is that all elected municipal officials win by majority (the candidate supported by more than 50% - the majority - of the voters) and not simply plurality (the greatest number of votes, but not necessarily the majority), and if past data is an indicator of future trends, then it appears as if RCV runoff tabulation rounds would have been utilized if the option were made available, in some years at least.

Charter Commission
I consulted with City Solicitor Natalie Burns on whether or not a Charter Commission would be required to incorporate RCV for municipal elections. Her opinion is that a change to the Charter to establish RCV could be accomplished through a simple Charter amendment, provided that the

5 SIZE OF MUNICIPALITY

As more municipalities adopt Ranked Choice Voting, the process of implementation will become easier to navigate. Already, municipalities can learn from the experiences of Portland and Westbrook in implementing Ranked Choice Voting for municipal elections. In addition, as more municipalities adopt RCV, there will be more cost sharing options for software, equipment, and expertise needed to calculate the results of a municipal election with Ranked Choice Voting. The League of Women Voters of Maine is consulting with state and national experts to identify future opportunities for cost sharing and cost savings.

However, for the time being, those costs are still a significant factor to consider. Consequently, at least for the time being, municipalities with larger budgets are better situated to take on the costs of adopting Ranked Choice Voting for municipal elections. If your municipal clerk is able to provide a cost estimate for the use of RCV, it can be useful to learn what percentage of the municipal elections budget this cost represents. If it is a high percentage, implementing RCV may not yet be feasible in your community.

EXAMPLE OF MAINE TOWNS



Large Municipalities

(>30K population)

Portland, Lewiston, Bangor



Medium Municipalities

(15-22K population)

Westbrook, Waterville, Biddeford,
Augusta, York, Falmouth



Small Municipalities

(5-10K population)

Freeport, Ellsworth, Hermon,
Belfast, Camden, Bar Harbor



Smallest Municipalities

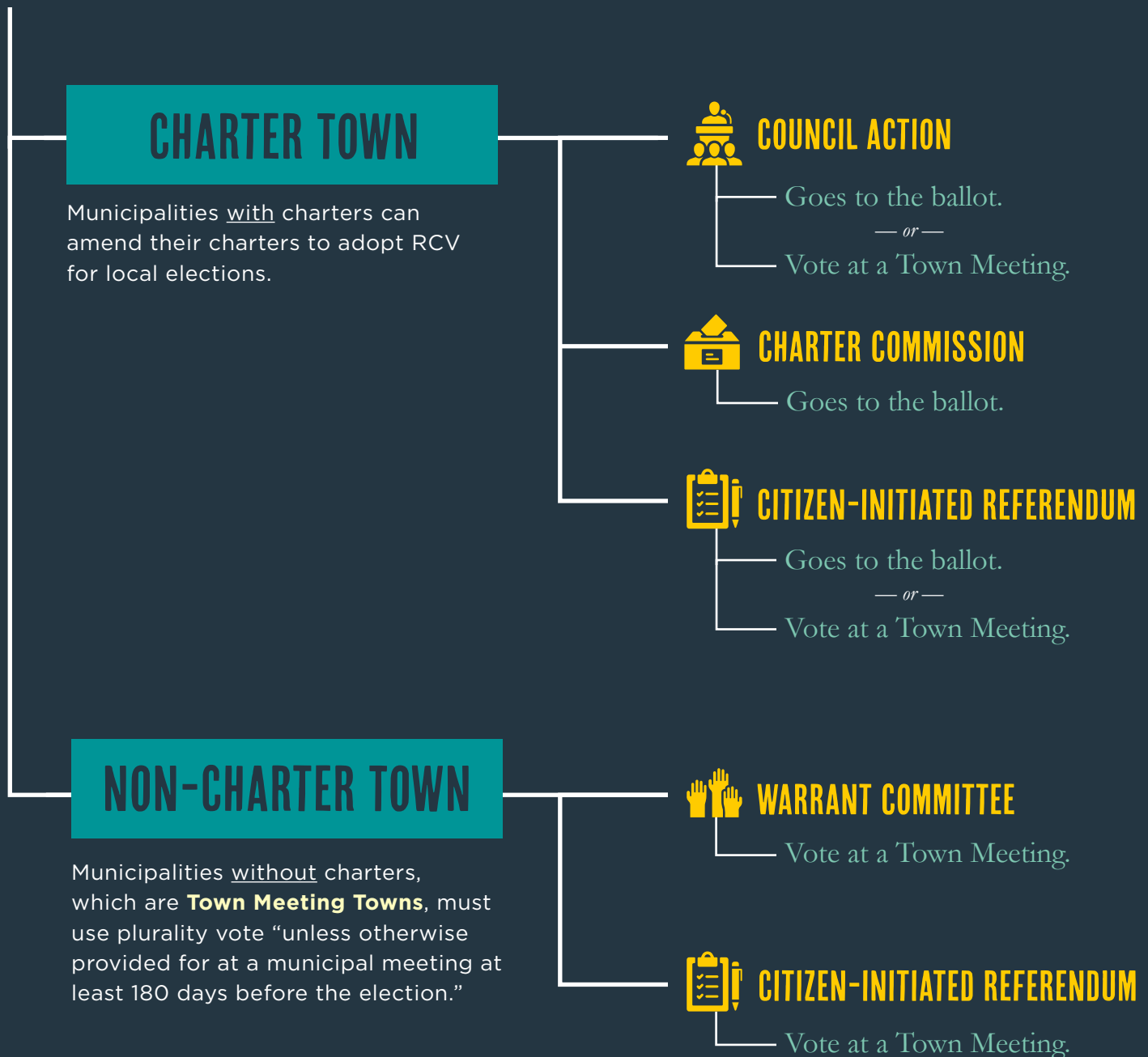
(<3K population)

Bowdoinham, Boothbay, Calais,
Blue Hill, Mexico, Hallowell,
Damariscotta

GETTING ON THE BALLOT



There are several formal steps involved in bringing Ranked Choice Voting to your municipality. These steps vary depending on the path to passage local RCV takes in your community, but all paths lead to voters having their say, either on a city-wide ballot referendum or at a Town Meeting.



WORD RECAP

Town Meeting Town — Town Meeting is a form of local government in which voting residents are eligible to directly legislate and pass budgets.

PATHWAY AVAILABLE

Charter Town



Non-Charter Town

**COUNCIL ACTION**

In this process, for cities or towns with a charter, the city or town council or select board votes to amend the charter to implement Ranked Choice Voting for municipal elections. The charter amendment is then presented to the voters on a municipality-wide ballot or at a Town Meeting.

PATHWAY AVAILABLE

Charter Town



Non-Charter Town

**CHARTER COMMISSION**

A municipality can also opt to implement Ranked Choice Voting when it undertakes a charter review process, called a charter commission. During charter commissions, commissioners undertake serious study of a municipality's governing document — its charter — and make recommendations on changes. Charter committee recommendations are presented on the ballot for the municipality to vote on. Charter commissions may represent a moment when a municipality is willing to consider a change such as RCV.

PATHWAY AVAILABLE

Charter Town



Non-Charter Town

**WARRANT COMMITTEE**

In this process, the select board or warrant committee of a non-charter, Town Meeting town would vote to put the question to a Town Meeting to institute RCV elections.

PATHWAY AVAILABLE

Charter Town



Non-Charter Town

**CITIZEN-INITIATED REFERENDUM**

A citizen-initiated referendum can be used to put the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting on the ballot. While the specific thresholds vary by municipality, in general a citizen-initiated referendum requires the collection of a number of signatures to put the question directly to voters. This is true for both charter towns and non-charter towns. In charter cities or towns, the question would appear on a town or city-wide ballot. In non-charter towns, or charter towns with Town Meeting governments, the question would be added to the warrant for a vote at a Town Meeting. It is important to double check the number of signatures required in your town.

Initiating the process of passing Ranked Choice Voting through your local **council** involves a member of the council introducing the proposal as an amendment to the town or city charter, the bill having one or more council sessions with a public hearing and work session, and the council voting to send the measure to the voters for approval. Depending on a municipality's particular council structure, there may be additional steps, including subcommittee meetings and votes, and informational sessions not relating to a specific proposal to be passed.

Generally, finding a member or members of the council willing to introduce a Ranked Choice Voting proposal will be the first step. The second step will be to pass a proposal to send local RCV to the ballot as a charter amendment, so voters weigh in before it is enacted. In Westbrook, a councilor brought local RCV forward after a member of the public gathered signatures supporting the issue, though these signatures were not formally submitted to initiate the measure.

After a councilor agrees to put the measure forward, a hearing on the proposal will usually be held, whether with the full council or in a subcommittee. This will be an important time for community members to speak in support of the measure. There will typically be multiple council meetings where the proposal is presented, but make

WORD RECAP

Council — City or town councils are a local form of government that serve the municipality. They are legislative bodies with powers defined by the municipal charter.



The process, simplified:

1

Find a member(s) who is interested in introducing RCV to the local council.



2

After the member puts RCV forward, the council hosts a hearing. Community members can offer their opinion on RCV. There may be multiple meetings so that everyone can fully consider the RCV proposal.



3

Council members vote on RCV! If they approve the RCV proposal, they will usually send it to the voters to decide.

sure to confirm this is the case in your municipality. If you are in touch with the councilor who introduced the measure, they may be able to tell you how they believe the vote will go and share any members of the council who need additional constituent outreach.

When the council votes on the proposal, it will either pass (to send the question to the ballot in the form of a charter

amendment) or it will fail. If it passes to the ballot, see the section on running a campaign (page 27). If it fails, don't be discouraged; the issue can be brought forward again in a future council. Further advocacy and education with the council and the public may be needed, and many important reforms take more than one attempt to pass.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can I find the contact information for my council members?

Check your town or municipality's website.

2. How do I know if this is a good option for my town?

First, reach out to your council members and see how they feel about Ranked Choice Voting. Are they in favor? If yes, then implementing RCV with council action may be a great approach!

3. What do I do if my council members are reluctant to take action?

If your councilors oppose RCV or are reluctant to take action, then it may be best to choose another course, such as a citizen-initiated referendum. See the next section for more information.

CHARTER COMMISSION

Charter Commissions are an opportunity for a community to open up its governing document, the **municipal charter**, and consider the full spectrum of possible changes to municipal government. A charter commission exists to either draft a new charter or propose revisions to the existing charter. Charter commissions have a mix of elected and appointed commissioners, and are formed either by a vote of the municipal council and voters or at set intervals, such as every 10 years. While we do not recommend attempting to form a charter commission solely for the purpose of passing RCV, charter commissions can be an opportunity for RCV to be introduced. For instance, RCV was initially introduced and approved in a charter commission process in Portland.

Advocating for RCV to a local charter commission can make the commission aware of the opportunity and help them decide whether to put RCV in its proposed charter revisions. Charter commissions decide on a set of recommended revisions to propose, and then those revisions are sent to voters at a municipal election, either as individual questions on a ballot or as one large package. If a majority of voters approve a proposed charter revision, it will be included in the charter.

WORD RECAP

Charter Commission — Exists to either draft a new municipal charter or propose revisions to the existing charter. Charter members are elected and/or appointed. This process occurs about every 10 years. Not every town has a Charter Commission.

Municipal charter — A governing document, similar to a constitution, for the municipality. Not every town has a charter.



The process, simplified:

1

First, your municipality will need a current Charter Commission in place. This occurs about every 10 years so that the municipal charter can be revised.



2

Bring forward a RCV proposal to the Charter Commission.



3

Members of the Charter Commission consider the RCV proposal, make any revisions if necessary, and once the Charter Commission process is complete, will send the revised municipal charter to the voters.



Election Day! Voters will choose whether or not to implement the revisions to the municipal charter, including the RCV proposal. If the measure passes, RCV will be implemented for your town.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do I know if this is a good option for my town?

In order to implement RCV for your town, first the Charter Commission should already be in place, or on the horizon, and conducting revisions to the municipal charter. Sometimes these revisions occur on a scheduled basis, sometimes only 8-10 years. It is not advisable to open the charter just for the sake of implementing RCV, because opening and revising a charter can take months, if not years, to complete the full process. However, if the charter is already open and being revised, then it could be a great moment to add a RCV proposal.

As an example, Portland voted to open its charter and create a Charter Commission in 2020. Several advocated for proportional RCV (pRCV). In 2022, the Charter Commission forwarded their revisions, including pRCV, of the municipal charter to the voters, and Portlanders decided what measures they wanted to pass in the November election.

2. How do I know how to write a RCV proposal for the Charter Commission?

We are here to help! Message us at info@lwvme.org.

3. What happens once RCV is on the ballot?

Time to educate voters and spread the word! See page 27 for more information.

WARRANT COMMITTEE

Similar to the Council process (see page 19), getting a question presented to voters at a Town Meeting often involves finding a member of the select board or warrant committee to include this question in the **warrant**. Not all towns have a separate warrant committee; in some towns, the select board fulfills this function. It is also possible to circulate petitions in your town to require questions to be placed on the warrant. You will want to familiarize yourself with the warrant process in your town.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do I know if this is a good option for my town?

This is a great fit for municipalities who are Town Meeting towns. These are typically smaller towns without a municipal charter (though some charter towns have chosen to maintain their Town Meeting form of government in their municipal charter).

2. How do I know how to write a RCV proposal for a Town Meeting?

We are here to help! Message us at info@lwvme.org.

WORD RECAP

Warrant — An agenda or proposal to be voted on by those who are present.

GETTING ON THE BALLOT



The process, simplified:

1

Find a member(s) of the select board or warrant committee who favors RCV. It is important to note that members of the select board or warrant committee do not legislate.



2

Select board or warrant committee members vote on whether or not to issue a warrant. The warrant would describe the RCV proposal. If the members vote in favor of the warrant, then they put out a notice for a Town Meeting.



3

At the Town Meeting, voters will vote on RCV. If it passes, then RCV will be implemented for your town.

A second path to pass local RCV is to take the issue directly to the ballot. In a **citizen-initiated** referendum process, a voter or group of voters in a municipality collects signatures for a measure from other voters in the municipality, turns those signatures in to their municipality, and then the issue is voted on by the municipality at a future election or Town Meeting. This can be effective in a municipality where a significant majority of voters likely support the issue, but the council resists moving forward. Creating and circulating a petition to create a legally-binding initiative can be a complicated process, so be sure to consult with others to make sure all of the procedures are properly followed.

First, you will want to make sure that your proposed language has been carefully written to do what you intend it to. After developing language, you will want to confirm what requirements there are for circulating petitions for a charter amendment, including who may circulate them, who may sign them, and what must be on the printed pages you present to potential signers. Your municipal clerk should be able to help with all of these questions. Collecting signatures can be a time-consuming effort; important factors to consider when undertaking this process include your ability to recruit other signature gatherers, the ease of collecting

WORD RECAP

Citizen Initiative — Allows a citizen(s) to propose legislation, which can then be placed on the ballot and voted on if the citizen(s) collect enough signatures in favor of the proposed legislation. In Maine, one can propose a state-wide citizen initiative or an initiative specific to their municipality.



The process, simplified:

1

Carefully write the proposed language for your RCV petition.



2

Confirm the requirements for circulating a petition. Your municipal clerk can help with this.



3

Collect the signatures!



4

Return the completed petitions to your municipal clerk so that they can be verified.

If you collect the number of signatures required in your community, you will then turn in those signatures to the clerk, who will verify them. At this point, the council or select board may need to take action to formally put the question before voters. There have been instances where councils have declined to put a question on the ballot, which is an issue that has led to court cases in the past. If there is no legal reason to keep the question from moving forward, then the council or select board should put it on the ballot or on the warrant, even if they do not support it.

Voters will then vote on the question at a time set by the council, often coinciding with a local or state election, or at a special or annual Town Meeting. If the question receives a majority of “Yes” votes, or if the majority of voters raise their hands in support, the question is approved, and Ranked Choice Voting will be implemented in your community!



5

After the petition signatures are verified, the RCV proposal will appear on the ballot in the next referendum election.



6

Election Day! Voters choose whether or not they want to implement RCV. If the measure passes, RCV will be implemented for your town.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How do I know if this is a good option for my town?

If you know that RCV has wide-spread support in your municipality and your council members are reluctant to take action, this may be a great approach.

2. How do I know how to write a RCV proposal for the petition?

We are here to help! Message us at info@lwvme.org.

3. What happens once RCV is on the ballot?

Time to educate voters and spread the word! See page 27 for more information.



WORKING WITH LOCAL ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS

While your local town or city clerk is unlikely to endorse or oppose a local RCV ballot question outright, the information they provide to the council, select board, or warrant committee will likely play a major role in whether the question gets full consideration. It is common practice for the governing body to request a presentation from the municipal clerk on what logistics, cost, and expertise is needed to conduct a local RCV election.

The information the clerk shares can be a make-or-break item for a local RCV question; if the clerk shares that the cost is exorbitant or other factors will make it difficult to implement, the governing body is unlikely to move forward with the proposal. If the clerk shares that there will only be minor changes in cost and staff time, the proposal stands a much better chance. An important way to help a clerk feel like implementing RCV locally is feasible is to let them know about the proposal as early as possible. If the first

time your clerk is hearing about a local RCV proposal is when the council asks for a briefing, it is probably too late to share the information necessary to make a clerk feel comfortable about implementation. Building a relationship with your clerk and offering to connect them to state and national RCV resources, along with clerks in those towns that have already implemented RCV, will go a long way in making RCV feel manageable.

Clerks who already run local RCV races can be among the most useful resources for a clerk seeking more information. By giving your clerk access to all of the information out there, they will be much better positioned to give a clear and objective report on local RCV implementation, such as the [memo to the Westbrook council](#) presented in 2021.



Have any questions about implementing RCV? We're here to help. Send us a message at info@lwvme.org.

Once Ranked Choice Voting is placed on the ballot or warrant, the first part of the work is done. But in most cases, voters will still have to give their direct approval for local RCV. The campaign for RCV requires many of the same efforts that the first phase did: education, advocacy, and outreach. The nature of this work will be very different, however. The voting public will generally not have the time or deep policy grounding for the same kind of in-depth work done in the first phase. Instead, more typical campaign methods will need to be used to get RCV passed.

Press and social media are important tools to help promote the question and should be primary areas of focus if there are limited resources to conduct a campaign. Depending on the resources

available, additional campaign work may include producing campaign materials such as mailings and yard signs in addition to voter outreach methods including phone-banking, textbanking, and canvassing.

It will be important to consider the timing of the question and voter turnout. If the municipal election coincides with a state or federal election, turnout could be high, and the campaign efforts will need to be wide ranging among voters. If the municipal election is on its own or at a Town Meeting, voter participation is likely to be quite small, so that a small but determined cadre of supporters can pass the question.



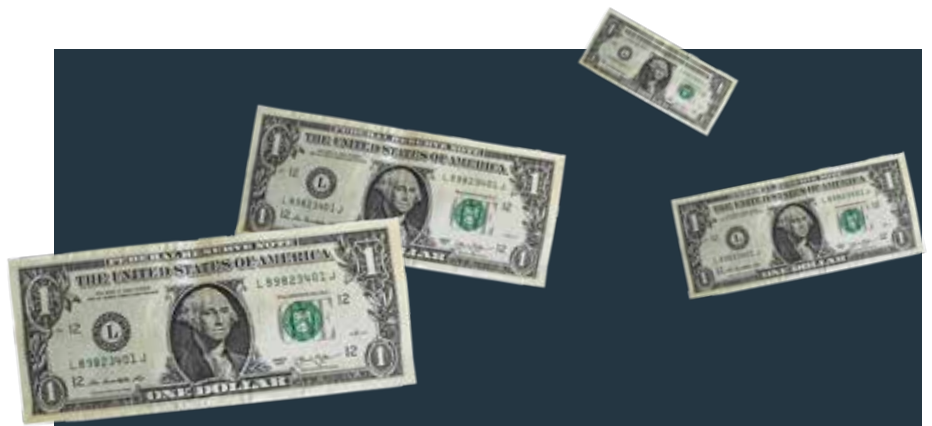
Consider your messaging

A strong campaign relies on strong messaging. Here are samples from the RCV Westbrook campaign:

- ➔ **More Choice for Voters.** Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) levels the playing field for all candidates and encourages candidates to take their case directly to you with a focus on the issues.
- ➔ **More Power for Voters.** Your voice matters more with a ranked ballot. You never feel like your vote is “wasted.” If your favorite candidate will not win, your vote counts for the candidate you ranked as your second choice.
- ➔ **Restores Majority Rule.** Ranked Choice Voting ensures that the candidate with the most votes and the broadest support wins, so voters get what they want.
- ➔ **Reduces Incentives for Negative Campaigning.** Candidates are encouraged to seek second choice rankings from voters whose favorite candidate is somebody else. You are less likely to rank a candidate as your second choice who has issued personal attacks against your favorite candidate.

Having a committed team of people dedicated to passing RCV is crucial to your campaign's success. As you begin to work on RCV in your community, identifying community members who also care about its success and getting them involved will ensure your campaign has the energy and capacity needed to win. As you encounter people in your community who care about passing RCV, invite them to volunteer or join the campaign team. These need not be major

commitments: volunteers can do specific tasks like submitting letters to the editor or communicating with voters for an hour as they are available. Forming a small campaign team that meets regularly can be useful to plan voter outreach, get endorsements, and determine if tasks like raising money (see sidebar below) are necessary. If several people can volunteer a little time, this will make a successful campaign easier to manage and much more likely to win.



Raising Money:

Depending on the size of your campaign and community, your campaign may need to raise money to use many of the tactics described in this section. Before you raise any money, be sure to contact your municipal clerk and understand what campaign finance laws and reporting requirements apply for your campaign. These may vary between municipalities. We encourage contacting people and organizations with political experience (such as the League) for more information on raising money if this is new to you and your campaign.



Have any questions about implementing

RCV? We're here to help. Send us a message at info@lwvme.org.

Directly contacting voters and asking them to support your local RCV ballot question is important for increasing awareness and support. There are three primary forms of voter contact: canvassing, phone-banking, and text-banking. With all of these forms of voter contact, a team of volunteers can reach a substantial part of your community. A brief description of each:



Canvass

Canvassing consists of going to a list of voter addresses and speaking directly to voters urging them to support your issue or leaving information for them about your campaign. It is the most effective tactic for gaining support and awareness from the people you speak with, though it requires substantial time investment.



Phone-banking

Phone-banking consists of calling a list of phone numbers for voters in your community and urging them to support your issue. While it is both less persuasive and has a lower contact rate than canvassing, many more voters can be contacted, and it can be done from home or an office.



Text-banking

Text-banking is similar to phone-banking, except instead of calling you send text messages. There are many programs that allow for a large number of texts to be sent in a very short time. It is less effective than phone-banking but has a very wide reach and can be easier to recruit volunteers to help with.

Before you start, you will need a list of voters:

To efficiently contact voters in your municipality, you will want a list of registered voters. Contact your municipal clerk for information on how to obtain the list of names and addresses of registered voters in your town.

How to sound convincing:

To convince voters that RCV could be a good thing for their town, keep the message short and sweet. Focus on the positives. Keep it local. Here is sample messaging from the RCV Westbrook Campaign:

Westbrook voters already use RCV in: federal general elections, federal primaries, and state primaries.

Westbrook voters have already twice supported Ranked Choice Voting at the ballot (during Nov 2016 and June 2018 elections).

Ranked Choice Voting would apply to races with more than two candidates, when no candidate has a majority of the first-choice votes. This situation has come up four times in Westbrook since 2016, including in the last two mayoral elections.

Awareness is crucial for a local ballot question campaign; without sufficient public education and advocacy, voters may not even be aware the issue is on the ballot, or may only hear what opponents are saying. Therefore, ensuring the voices of supporters are heard in press coverage is critical if there is a media outlet that covers your municipality. If there are reporters who typically cover municipal government in your community, reach out to them and let them know you are working to get this passed. This will establish a relationship and ensure you are contacted when they write about the issue. Additionally, if there is not regular coverage of municipal politics, you will want to reach out to reporters in the region and let them know about the effort once positive progress is being made. This will help you set the narrative as the effort moves forward. Recruiting prominent community members to provide endorsements of local RCV will also strengthen your campaign.

Another cost-free way to get the word out about your campaign is to write letters to the editor (LTEs) in your local newspaper. A simple and strong LTE stating why RCV should be adopted in your community can make people aware of the issue from a positive perspective. As the campaign progresses, you may want to have different people (including supportive elected officials) submit LTEs supporting local RCV at strategically timed moments. If an anti-RCV letter is published, it is often a good idea to submit a positive LTE in response that rebuts false information in the previous letter.

FREE TOOLS AT YOUR DISPOSAL



Press | Host a press conference about the RCV ballot initiative. Write an opinion (op-ed) or a letter to the editor (LTE) piece and submit it to your local newspaper. Reach out to your local papers to see if they would cover a story about RCV. If there are no local papers, consider reaching out to some of the bigger state-wide papers, like the Bangor Daily News and the Portland Press Herald.



Social Media | You can use social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, and Tiktok, to create and share content about RCV. This helps to educate and inform voters about the upcoming election. You can spread the word by posting organic posts or boosting them (paid ads).

THESE METHODS COST MONEY



Campaign Materials | You can utilize the classic campaign materials to spread the message: posters, postcards, and yard signs.

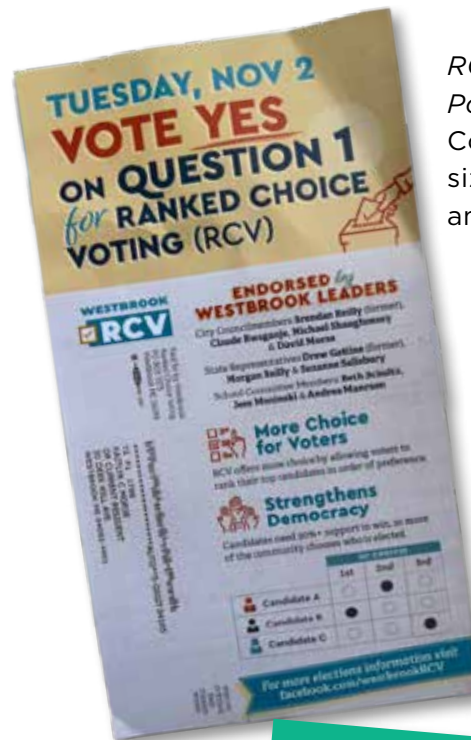


Have any questions about RCV communications? We're here to help. Send us a message at info@lwvme.org.

Ballot question campaigns use several types of paid communications, including campaign mailings, television and internet advertising, and robocalls. For a campaign in a Maine municipality, mailings and internet advertising are the two tools most likely to fit a local RCV campaign. These can often be the most expensive part of a campaign, but they can have a big effect.

Campaign mail can reach mailboxes throughout your municipality and create broad awareness of your issue. While the persuasive effect of mailings can be limited, they can play a significant role in making sure voters know to expect the question on the ballot. In a small town, a mail campaign may be able to reach every mailbox with a low cost. Examples of mailings used for past local RCV campaigns are below:

Internet advertising can be a relatively inexpensive way to reach voters in your municipality. Facebook is the most common platform for internet advertising, though others are used, too. Advertising campaigns can be targeted to only reach users in your area, which ensures the cost of a campaign is low, and that you will reach the people you want to.



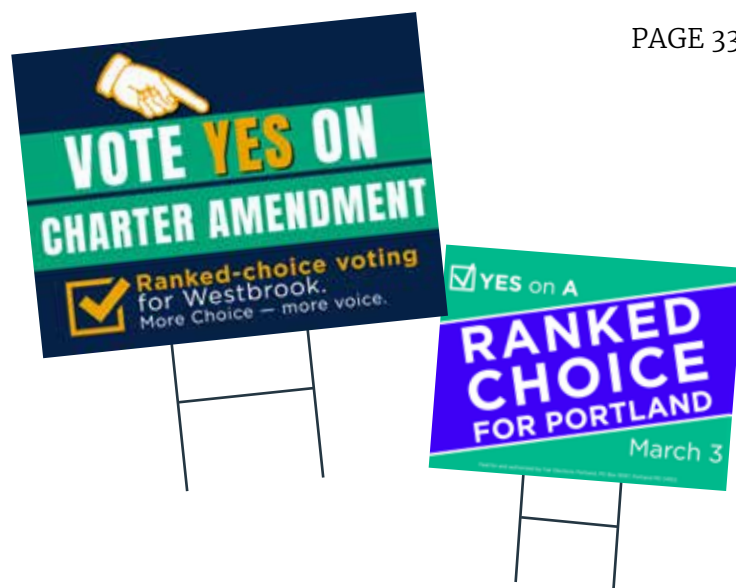
RCV Endorsement Postcard
Common postcard sizes include 4"x6" and 5.5"x8"



RCV Educational Postcards

Common postcard sizes include 4"x6" and 5.5"x8"

Yard signs are a highly visible way for your campaign to be seen. Giving yard signs to highly engaged volunteers and posting them in visible areas in town where campaign signs are often posted can be helpful for keeping local RCV in the conversation. Yard signs can be expensive and easily swallow your budget. Corrugated plastic (includes metal “H” stake) will survive any harsh weather and the test of time, but they tend to be the most expensive option. Paper signs (folded over a metal “U” stake) can be a cheaper option but do not hold up as well.



RCV Lawn Sign

Common sign sizes include 18”x24” & 14”x22”

SAMPLE PRICE GUIDE:

ITEM	SIZE	QUANTITY	PRICE
Check here if you would like to order this item.	Select the size that you would like.	Select how many of this item you would like.	These prices are just estimates. They will vary depending on the size.
<input type="checkbox"/> Flyers	<input type="checkbox"/> 8.5x11” <input type="checkbox"/> 5.5x8.5”	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 100 <input type="checkbox"/> 250 <input type="checkbox"/> 500 <input type="checkbox"/> —	\$22.50 \$45.00 \$112.50 \$225
<input type="checkbox"/> Postcards	<input type="checkbox"/> 4x6” <input type="checkbox"/> 5.5x8.5”	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 100 <input type="checkbox"/> 250 <input type="checkbox"/> 500 <input type="checkbox"/> —	\$14.00 \$28.00 \$70.00 \$140.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Posters	<input type="checkbox"/> 11x17” <input type="checkbox"/> 18x24”	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 <input type="checkbox"/> 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 100 <input type="checkbox"/> —	\$57.50 \$115.00 \$230.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Yard signs	All yard signs will be 18x24”	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 75 <input type="checkbox"/> 100 <input type="checkbox"/> —	\$340.00 \$510.00 \$680.00

+ postage

\$12.00
\$24.00
\$60.00
\$120.00

SUMMARY

Taken together, these campaign tactics can play a large part in determining whether a Ranked Choice Voting ballot question passes at the polls. It is not simply enough to get a question on the ballot; voters must be aware that it is on the ballot and be ready to vote to pass it. A ballot question campaign, even one with just a few dedicated volunteers, can go a long way to making that happen.

Additional Resources:

FairVote toolkit: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/fairvote/pages/3050/attachments/original/1467733133/Toolkit_Complete_7.5.16.pdf?1467733133



**Have any questions about
implementing RCV for your town?**

We're here to help. Send us a message
at info@lwvme.org.



GLOSSARY

Citizen Initiative — Allows a citizen(s) to propose legislation, which can then be placed on the ballot and voted on if the citizen(s) collect enough signatures in favor of the proposed legislation. In Maine, one can propose a state-wide citizen initiative or an initiative specific to their municipality.

City council — A form of local government that serves the municipality. Similar to a town council.

Charter Commission — Exists to either draft a new municipal charter or propose revisions to the existing charter. Charter members are elected and/or appointed. This process occurs about every 10 years. Not every town has a Charter Commission.

Charter Municipalities — Municipalities with charters can amend their charters to adopt RCV for local elections.

Council — City or town councils are a local form of government that serve the municipality. They are legislative bodies with powers defined by the municipal charter.

Instant run-off election — Also known as RCV.

Multi-winner elections — An election where candidates run to fill multiple open seats on the same ballot.

Municipal charter — A governing document, similar to a constitution, for the municipality. Not every town has a charter.

Non-charter Municipalities — Municipalities without charters must use plurality vote “unless otherwise provided for at a municipal meeting at least 180 days before the election.” In order to institute RCV, non-charter towns must include a measure on their Town Meeting warrant to change the election method.

Plurality voting — A voting method where the candidate who receives the most votes wins the election, regardless of whether or not they received a majority of votes.

Proportional representation — A multi-winner RCV election where the outcome is proportional. The candidates who win the seats proportionally represent the political spectrum of the voters.

School board/committee — Responsible for overseeing the provision and maintenance of local schools.

Select board — A form of local government, but not a legislative body, that serves and provides fiscal management. Members may issue warrants (such as proposals) for residents to vote on during Town Meetings.

Single-winner elections — A RCV election where a single candidate receives a majority of support from voters.

Town council — A form of local government that serves the municipality. A council may legislate or allow the town residents to vote on proposals.

Town Meeting Town — Town Meeting is a form of local government in which voting residents are eligible to directly legislate and pass budgets.

Traditional run-off election — If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a second election is held between the two candidates who received the most votes in that first election.

Warrant — An agenda or proposal to be voted on by those who are present.