

Oakland Preference Voting Questionnaire

The Oakland City Charter provides for the use of preference voting (also called “instant runoff voting” or IRV when used for single-winner elections) in special elections to fill Council vacancies and in special elections to fill Mayoral vacancies. Instant runoff voting, by allowing voters to rank candidates and using the rankings to simulate a series of runoffs, guarantees a majority winner in a single election. The only special elections held under these charter provisions, one in 2001 to fill a Council vacancy in District 6 and the one in which you are now participating to fill a vacancy in District 2, have not used preference voting. In 2001, the winning candidate in the special election was elected with approximately 33% of the vote against three opponents on the ballot, then was defeated in 2002 receiving approximately 34% of the vote against two candidates on the ballot. With nine candidates running, it seems likely that the winner of the current election will receive substantially less than a majority.

1. The City has several options for conducting standalone special elections, with only one race on the ballot, besides paying the County to run the election with its existing voting equipment (which is not yet certified for use in preference voting elections), but Oakland was not prepared to choose such an option for the current election.

Should the City be using preference voting for this District 2 special election?

2. Presently, Oakland’s Municipal Elections Code contains no provisions specifying how to decide whether to use preference voting in particular special elections, leaving the decision to the language of the resolution calling a special election and the discretion of the City Clerk.

(A) If elected, will you introduce an ordinance requiring the City to use preference voting in any standalone special election?

(B) If elected, will you introduce an ordinance requiring the City, once the County is able to conduct a preference voting election for the City, to use preference voting in any special election that is consolidated with an election run by the County?

3. Some potential obstacles to use of preference voting in special elections are due to advance preparations needed, especially before the first use of preference voting, that may be difficult to complete in the four month period between calling and the holding of a special election.

(A) If elected, will you introduce any ordinances needed to specify procedures for use in preference voting elections?

(B) If elected, will you introduce any measures needed to direct the City Clerk's office to prepare in advance to be ready to either conduct a standalone special election itself or contract with an appropriate vendor to conduct a standalone special election?

(C) If elected, will you introduce any measures needed to direct the City Clerk's office to plan an appropriate campaign to educate voters about the use of preference voting in a special election?

4. Will you take a leadership role in ensuring that the County will be able as soon as possible to conduct preference voting elections for the City?

5. Preference voting has many advantages that are not only applicable to special elections to fill vacancies. For example, instant runoff voting could allow Oakland's elected officials to be chosen in the generally higher turnout November elections, without long lame-duck periods for officials whose replacements are chosen in the often lower-turnout primary election. Choice voting (also known as "single transferable vote" or STV), the preference voting method applied to multi-seat elections, could be used with at-large seats or multi-member districts to encourage representation on the Council of geographically dispersed groups.

(A) Do you support amending the Oakland City Charter to use instant runoff voting, once it is feasible and cost-effective, for all single-winner offices?

(5. Preference voting other than in special elections, continued)

(B) Do you support amending the Oakland City Charter to use choice voting, once it is feasible and cost-effective, to elect the City Council from several multi-member districts?

(C) Do you support amending the Oakland City Charter to use choice voting, once it is feasible and cost-effective, to elect the School Board from several multi-member districts?

Candidate Signature:

Date:

Candidate Name:

Campaign Phone Number:

Campaign Mailing Address:

Campaign Email Address:

Please sign this pledge and return it to Oakland Preference Voting, c/o Dave Kadlecsek, 267 Lester Ave. #301, Oakland, CA 94606, email oakprefvote@igc.org.