

## **Instant Runoff Voting – Good or Bad for North Carolina? Comments from the N. C. Coalition for Verified Voting, Jan. 21, 2008**

**1. DOES IRV SAVE MONEY? NO.** IRV would require new voting machines, more expensive programming, additional voter education, and increased ballot printing expenditures. The Town of Cary would need to spend at least \$360,000 or about \$400,000 to purchase IRV compatible voting machines and more software. Wake's taxpayers spent an estimated \$9,000 on IRV voter education for the Cary IRV Pilot, which was augmented heavily by IRV advocacy groups. A feasibility study by Vermont's Secretary of State's recommends from .10 - .15 cents per registered voter, while San Francisco actually spent \$1.80 per registered voter.

**2. CAN NC'S VOTING MACHINES COUNT IRV? NO.** NC machines cannot tabulate IRV According to the State Board of Elections Voting Systems Manager Keith Long, "There are no provisions on ES&S equipment to tabulate IRV."

**3. DOES IRV INCREASE TURNOUT? NO.** In fact, IRV would have prevented the increase in turnout seen in the Nov 07, 2007 runoff election in Rocky Mount, NC. More voters turned out in the runoff election than did in the first election. In San Francisco, the largest IRV jurisdiction in the US, voter turnout has decreased since the implementation of IRV. San Francisco had 100,000 fewer voters in the 2007 IRV mayoral election than in the traditional mayoral runoff in 2003.

**4. DOES IRV PROVIDE A MAJORITY WINNER? NO.** Not in Cary, and not in San Francisco (the largest IRV jurisdiction in the US). In the Cary experiment, the winner of an "instant runoff" in the District B Town Council contest took office with less than 40 percent of the first-choice votes cast, and less than 50 percent of the votes of people who showed up on Election Day. In the 20 IRV elections in San Francisco held since the referendum establishing it passed, any elections going into a "runoff" were won with less than a majority of the vote.

**5. DOES IRV CREATE CHAOS? YES.** IRV creates more confusion in casting and counting the ballots. Some voters ranked the same candidate more than once. Some came to the polls facing an unfamiliar voting method. One Hendersonville voter advised "It doesn't make any sense to me, and I can guarantee you because of the way they have it set up there are people in this town that are going to lose their vote," he said. ..."I call it instant confusion." Manual counts in Cary were inaccurate - and had to be re done at a later date. Candidates reported diverting chunks of campaigning time to educating voters. Rueben Blackwell, Rocky Mount City Council Member and co-chair for the NC Justice Center advised that: "To cast out an instant runoff speculative experiment in communities that have had historic voting rights violations issues is absolutely wrong..."

**6. DOES IRV REQUIRE VOTER EDUCATION? YES.** Both election officials and candidates must spend time educating the voters and their supporters on how the process works, and how to mark their choices. According to exit polls - 25% in Cary weren't prepared to rank choices and more than 35% in Henderson weren't prepared. These numbers will likely worsen if the instant runoff experience in San Francisco is any predictor. In San Francisco, the number of voters prepared to rank their choices dropped from 67% in 2004 to 54% in 2005. We can't even get straight ticket right after 20 years, and have the highest under-vote for president in the US because of this.

**7. DOES IRV HAVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES? YES.** You can hurt your preferred candidate by voting for him. IRV fails the monotonicity criterion - the principle that voting for your favorite candidate should always benefit that candidate. Mathematical models prove that ranking a candidate lower can cause that person to climb in the overall rankings.

## Documentation

OCTOBER 3, 2007 Democracy N.C.'s Bob Hall ... on Instant Runoff Voting

"The Wake County Board of Elections is using about \$9,000 in money from their existing budget for routine mailings." <http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A161472>

2007 Report to the Vermont General Assembly by the Vermont Office of the Secretary of State

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV): Administrative Implementation Options and Costs

<http://vermont-elections.org/elections1/2007IRVReport3.8.07.doc>

Jan. 07, 2008 email from Keith Long NCSBOE on voting machine IRV compatibility

"There are no provisions on ES&S equipment to tabulate IRV."

[http://www.ncvoter.net/downloads/Keith\\_Long\\_Machines\\_Not\\_IRV\\_Compatible.pdf](http://www.ncvoter.net/downloads/Keith_Long_Machines_Not_IRV_Compatible.pdf)

See "Councilwoman wins by big margin" By Eric Klamut Rocky Mount Telegram on Nov. 07, 2007.

<http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/local/content/news/stories/2007/11/07/ward4.html>

San Francisco's drop in voter turnout after Instant Runoff Voting implementation

<http://www.instantrunoffvoting.us/turnout.html>

Oct 30, 2007 Instant runoff needs scrutiny Raleigh News & Observer

[http://www.ncvoter.net/downloads/Instant\\_runoff\\_needs\\_scrutiny\\_Oct\\_30\\_2007.pdf](http://www.ncvoter.net/downloads/Instant_runoff_needs_scrutiny_Oct_30_2007.pdf)

Instant Runoff Consistent Majority Failure. Instant runoff voting facts or fiction.

<http://www.instantrunoffvoting.us/majority.html>

Oct 19, 2007 Voter finds new system frustrating By Harrison Metzger Times-News

<http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20071019/NEWS/710190361>

April 23, 2007. More resist new runoff voting idea\_ Rocky Mount Telegram

[http://www.ncvoter.net/downloads/IRV\\_More\\_Resist\\_New\\_Runoff\\_Voting\\_idea\\_Apr\\_23\\_07.pdf](http://www.ncvoter.net/downloads/IRV_More_Resist_New_Runoff_Voting_idea_Apr_23_07.pdf)

Oct 30, 2007 Critics Take Runoff Concerns To Elections Board NBC 17

<http://www.nbc17.com/midatlantic/ncn/search.apx.-content-articles-NCN-2007-10-30-0028.html>

October 5, 2004 ELECTION 2004 Ranked-choice voting a matter of picking 1, 2, 3. Despite outreach efforts, many S.F. residents confused Suzanne Herel, Chronicle Staff Writer

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/10/05/BAG0N93Q5S1.DTL>

2007 Report to the Vermont General Assembly by the Vermont Office of the Secretary of State

<http://vermont-elections.org/elections1/2007IRVReport3.8.07.doc>

An Assessment of Ranked-Choice Voting in the San Francisco 2005 Election

[http://www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/election/Elections\\_Pages/July1706.pdf](http://www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/election/Elections_Pages/July1706.pdf)

Oct 17, 2007 To stem runoff votes, new ballots have voters rank top 3

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/2007-10-17-Runoff\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/2007-10-17-Runoff_N.htm)

San Francisco RCV elections: consistent majority failure.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Instant-](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Instant-runoff_voting#More_on_San_Francisco_RCV_elections:_consistent_majority_failure.)

[runoff\\_voting#More\\_on\\_San\\_Francisco\\_RCV\\_elections:\\_consistent\\_majority\\_failure.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Instant-runoff_voting#More_on_San_Francisco_RCV_elections:_consistent_majority_failure.)

**Attachment**

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Keith Long](#)  
**To:** [jmc27106@earthlink.net](mailto:jmc27106@earthlink.net)  
**Cc:** [Don Wright](#); [Gary Bartlett](#); [Johnnie McLean](#)  
**Sent:** 1/7/2008 5:51:41 AM  
**Subject:** RE: req info i.e IRV implementation

Please advise what enhancements must be made to North Carolina's optical scanners, touch screens and automarks in order to accommodate IRV.

There are no provisions on ES&S equipment to tabulate IRV.

Please advise the results of Stephen Berger's work, any reports or correspondence, and the timelines for IRV enhancements.

No additional work was authorized or received.



**Keith Long, PMP**

**NC Voting Systems Project Manager**

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-----Original Message-----

**From:** [jmc27106@earthlink.net](mailto:jmc27106@earthlink.net) [mailto:[jmc27106@earthlink.net](mailto:jmc27106@earthlink.net)]  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 05, 2008 4:40 PM  
**To:** Keith Long  
**Cc:** Don Wright  
**Subject:** req info i.e IRV implementation

North Carolina State Board of Elections  
Don Wright, General Counsel  
Keith Long, Voting Systems Manager

Dear Keith,

I have two requests for information:

Please advise what enhancements must be made to North Carolina's optical scanners, touch screens and automarks in order to accommodate IRV.

Please advise the results of Stephen Berger's work, any reports or correspondence, and the timelines for IRV enhancements.

Raleigh News & Observer. Point of View: Jan 14, 2008

### **Worrisome realities mar instant runoff**

Joyce McCloy

WINSTON-SALEM - The State Board of Elections will soon be reporting to lawmakers on the success of recent experiments with instant runoff voting in two North Carolina municipal elections. With the instant runoff voting system, voters casting a ballot in races with more than two candidates mark a first and (if desired) second and third choice for each office. If no candidate receives a majority during the first round, the second choices of losing candidates are reallocated to the top two contenders.

A news release citing exit polls proclaimed the experiment a success, but failed to consider some complexities and unintended consequences.

"Instant runoff voting" is actually a misleading name, because it implies that the method achieves the same result as a real runoff. The system used in Cary is really a tally and elimination scheme, retallying without revoting (reallocating), and repeating until a majority of votes are reshuffled into one pile.

Instant runoff voting can provide a different outcome than traditional runoffs, and, compared to a system with a different-day runoff in close races, deprives voters of the time and opportunity to learn more about the top two contenders.

WE SHOULD CONSIDER HOW THE SYSTEM AFFECTS VOTERS and the integrity of our elections.

In October, town-election voters in Cary faced an unfamiliar voting method and had additional choices to make. But not surprisingly, Cary's performance was above average, just as Cary is above average in income and educational levels and Internet connections.

Hendersonville, however, had poorer results -- over one third of voters polled were not prepared to rank their choices. Instant runoff voting relies on voter education, something North Carolina does poorly. Our state has the highest "undervote" rate for president in the country, because voters can't even vote a straight ticket correctly.

Consider the experience of two different municipalities, one using instant runoff voting and one not.

In the Cary experiment, the winner of an "instant runoff" in the District B Town Council contest took office with less than 40 percent of the first-choice votes cast, and less than 50 percent of the votes of people who showed up on Election Day. It is possible that in a one-on-one contest the outcome would have been different.

In Rocky Mount, where there was a traditional runoff on a separate day, more voters had a say than would be possible with instant runoff voting.

In Rocky Mount's October election, City Council member Lois Watkins trailed a better-funded challenger, Tom Looney, by 12 votes. In a November runoff between the two, 448 more voters came to the polls than had in the October election. Watkins won the election with the votes of 60 percent of all those who showed up. This would not have been possible with instant runoff voting.

Instant runoff voting's implementation may also threaten North Carolina's highly praised and hard-won verified voting law.

Since North Carolina voting machines lack instant runoff voting capability, the Wake Board of Elections had to manually sort and count the "instant runoff" votes on Cary's optically scanned ballots. One small error cascaded into a miscount that had to be corrected at another date. To automate the process, Cary would have to purchase new machines.

For Hendersonville, a touch-screen voting machine county, the State Board of Elections put together uncertified "work-arounds," circumventing the legal method of manually sorting and counting "paper trails." Without this workaround, it is doubtful Hendersonville would have volunteered for the pilot program.

No instant-runoff capable equipment meets North Carolina's standards -- so will we gut those standards?

Lawmakers and citizens understand that we need our verified voting law, and we need to implement it correctly. Our standards for voting systems, software and vendors are key to protecting North Carolina voters from harm caused by uncertified software or unscrupulous vendors. We ignore those at our peril.

If the objective of an election process is to discern the will of the voters, then that process must be the simplest, most transparent and most enfranchising method for all voters.

(Joyce McCloy is founder of the N.C. Coalition for Verified Voting.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The Wake County Board of Elections is holding a public forum on instant runoff voting in Cary on Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Cary Town Hall, 316 N. Academy St.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/print/monday/opinion/story/878423.html>