

FAIRVOTE

Ranked Choice Voting:

Overview & Lessons Learned

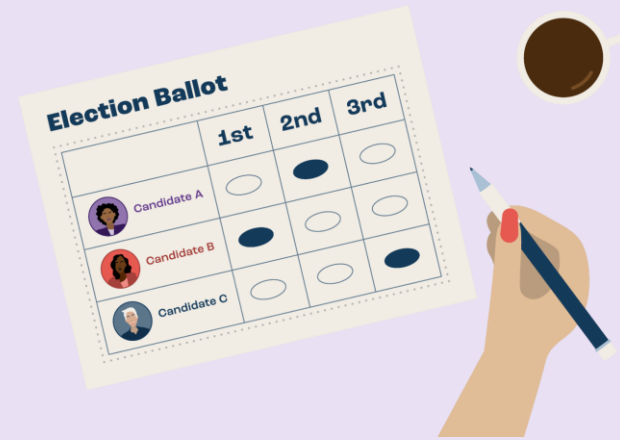
- ▶ Deb Otis, FairVote Director of Policy and Research



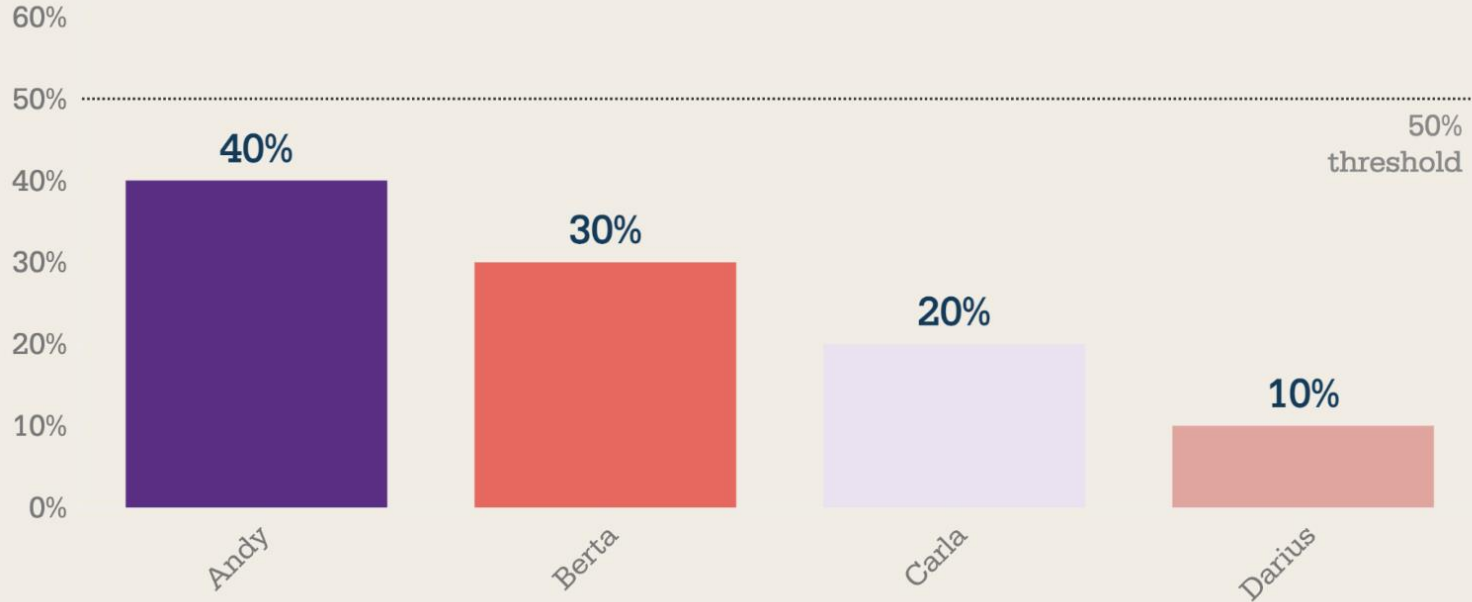
WHAT IS RANKED CHOICE VOTING



- ▶ Voters have the option to **rank candidates** in order of their preference.
- ▶ RCV **promotes majority winners**. If no candidate has a majority of first-choice preferences, candidates are eliminated one-by-one in an “**instant runoff**” until there is a majority winner.
- ▶ It’s a **simple change** with **powerful impacts** for our democracy.

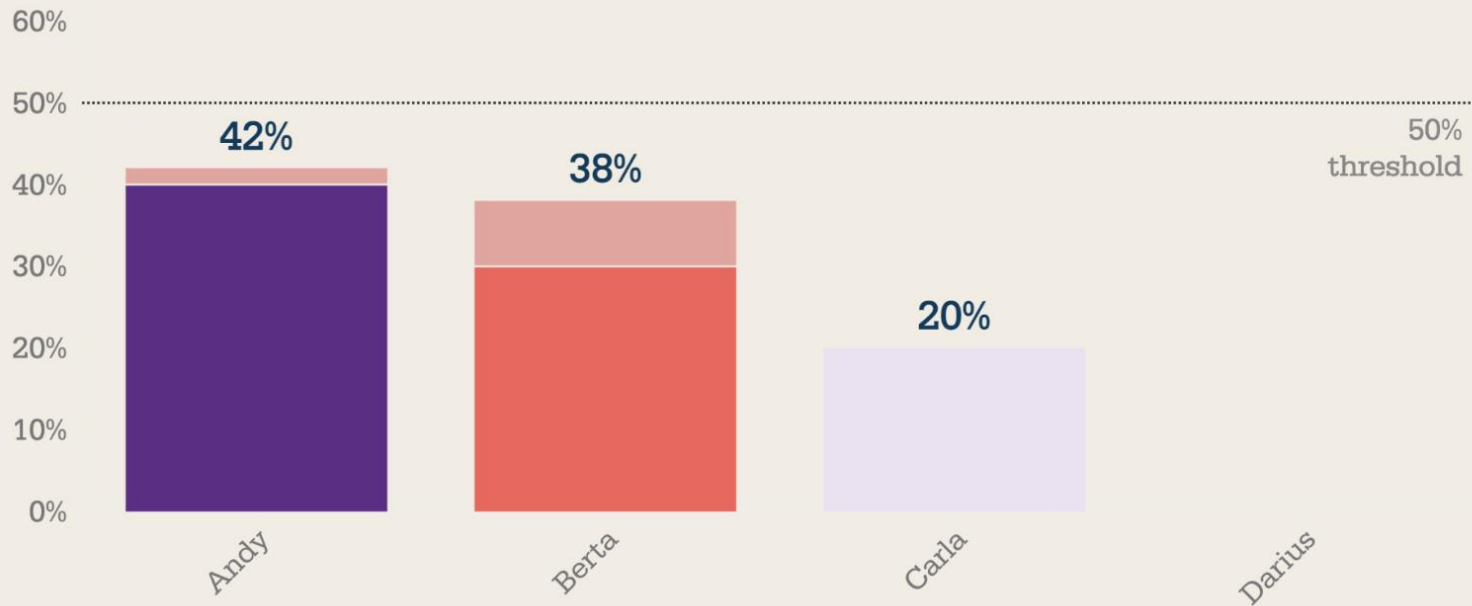


ROUND 1



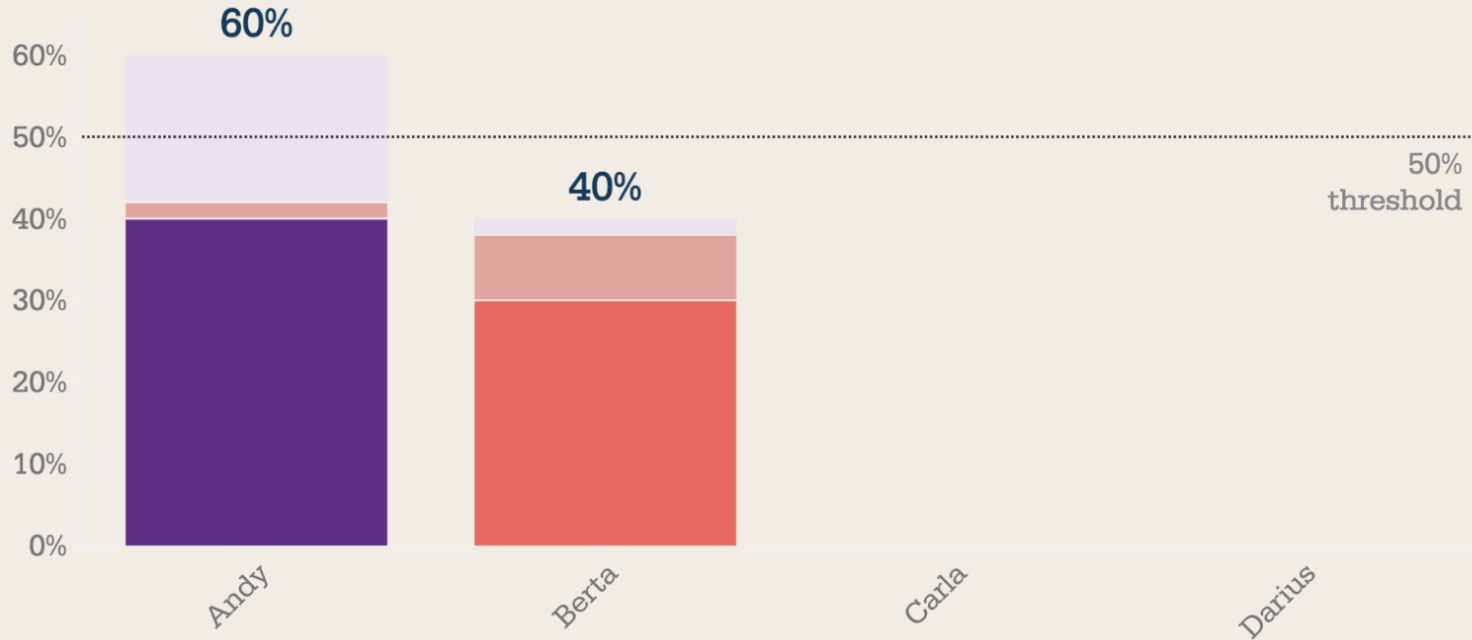
No candidate has more than half of 1st choices. The last-place candidate will be eliminated.

ROUND 2



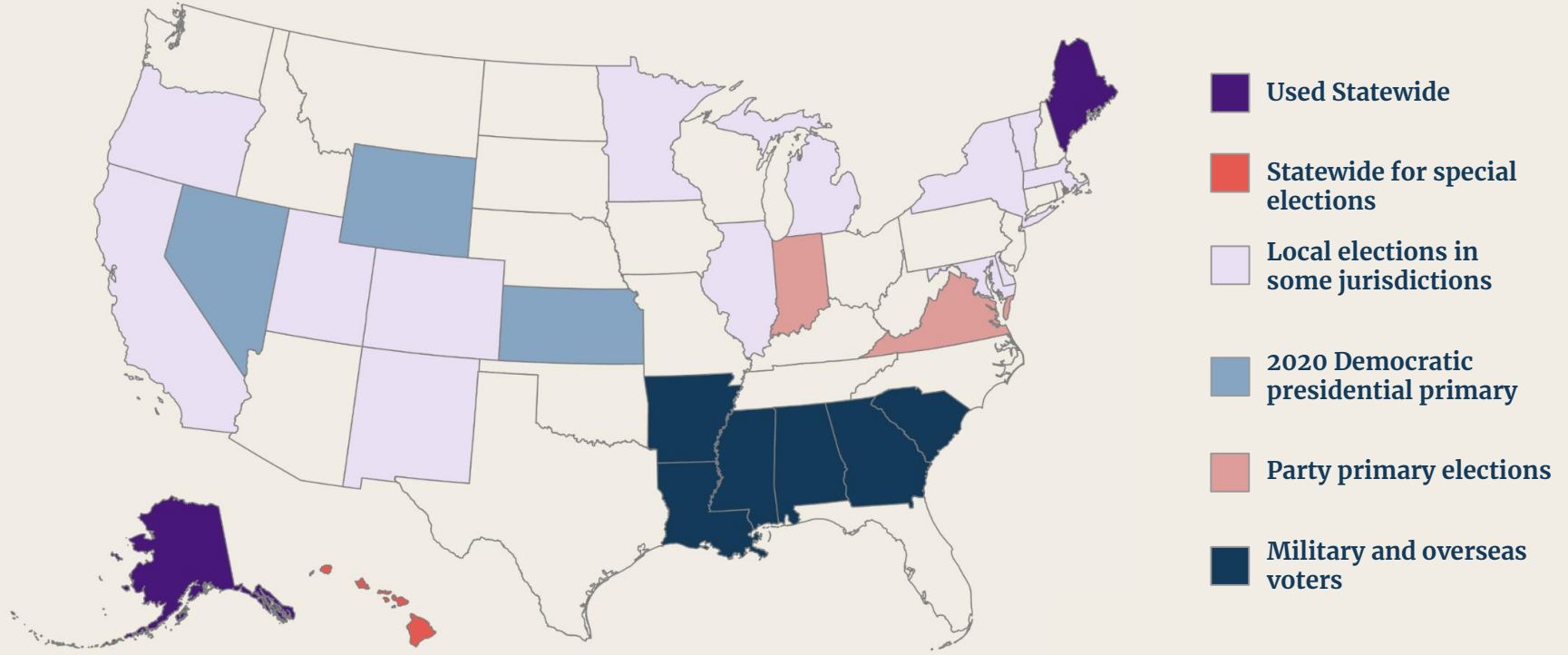
Darius is eliminated. Those ballots count for the voters' 2nd choices.

ROUND 3



Carla is eliminated. Those ballots count for the voters' next choices.
Andy wins the election.

WHERE IS RCV USED?



HOW RCV TRANSFORMS ELECTIONS



- ▶ Promotes voter choice
- ▶ No more vote-splitting & strategic voting
- ▶ Promotes majority winners
- ▶ Improves campaign civility
- ▶ Improved representation for women & people of color
- ▶ Creates incentives for broader engagement with voters

HOW DOES RCV WORK IN PRACTICE?



Voters like RCV & use rankings

- 77% in NYC
- 62% in Utah
- 94% in Santa Fe
- 71% of voters rank 2+ candidates (more in competitive races!)
- Voters of color tend to use more rankings

RCV encourages “sincere voting”

- In Utah, voters said they were more likely to vote for their honest favorite by a 30-to-1 margin!

RCV elects winners with broad support

- All winners have majority of final-round votes
- Two-thirds of races have majority of *total* votes cast.
- 73% of voters ranked the winner in their top 3

HOW DOES RCV WORK IN PRACTICE?



RCV improves the tone of campaigns

- Less mudslinging, more “issues” campaigning
- Candidates must appeal to a broader group of voters

RCV improves representation

- Over the last decade, women won half of municipal RCV races
- NYC has most diverse city council in history
- Voters of color tend to use more rankings

RCV saves \$\$ by eliminating runoffs

- Turnout declines in runoffs by 30% - 40%
- Runoffs are expensive; RCV saves \$10M for NYC

WHERE IS THE RESEARCH MORE MIXED?



Unclear impact on voter turnout.

- Other factors drive turnout, like election timing, competitiveness, etc.
- Ballot style doesn't appear to have a strong impact.

Unclear impact on voter trust.

- Voters who have used RCV report that they like it and trust the outcome.
- Voters who have not used RCV are sometimes skeptical.
- One study found that poll respondents were uneasy with the possibility of a “come from behind win” in RCV, but not in two-round runoffs.



RANKED CHOICE VOTING HAS MANY USES

- ▶ General elections
- ▶ Party primaries
- ▶ Presidential primaries
- ▶ With or without “open primaries”
- ▶ Multi-seat offices

Questions?



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