Current Voting System in RI

- Issues
  - Allows for candidates who do not receive at least 50% of the vote to win a primary/election

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) system

*Information below is based on studies conducted by the National Conference on State Legislatures (NSCL)

- Implementation
  - RI's current voting machines can handle RCV
  - Vote tabulation software and ballot design software will need to be updated
  - Consultants/outside groups should be used to implement RCV
- Issues
  - Voter/Candidate education
    - Extensive voter/candidate education must be conducted to ensure voters and candidates understand how to vote the ballot and how election results are processed
    - According to "Self-Reported Understanding of Ranked Choice Voting" that analyzed voters' understanding of RCV, nonwhite voters reported lower levels of comprehension than white voters
  - Poll worker training
    - Extensive poll worker training to ensure poll workers understand how RCV works
  - Implementation costs
    - Updated vote tabulation software
    - Updated ballot design software
    - Voter education/outreach costs
    - Cost of labor dedicated to implementing RCV
    - Average cost to switching to RCV elections is $154,759
    - Consultant/outside group costs
    - If only some contests use RCV, we may incur a significant increase in ballot costs if we have to make separate ballots
  - Risk-limiting audits
    - We must ensure the ability to audit (risk-limiting) our elections if RCV is used
    - RLAs have not been widely done in RCV elections
    - Existing software and technology can conduct an RLA in a RCV contest if the contest yields one winner but not in a RCV contest with multiple winners (city/town council/school committee)
  - Ballot design
    - Due to our truncated election cycle and short time between our primary and general election, increases in ballot design time may cause the state to violate

the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act which requires our office to send mail ballots to military/overseas voters at least 45 days before a primary/election
- RCV will also create issues coding and testing voting equipment due to our truncated election cycle
- Will RCV affect our ability to meet our bilingual ballot requirements?
  - Results reporting
    - Most RCV jurisdictions report delays in election results
  - Voter turnout
    - For the little research that exists regarding RCV and turnout, the results are mixed
  - Polarization
    - Preliminary research suggests only moderate impacts on reducing polarization

Top 2 Voting system

- Implementation
  - Top 2 will result in more candidates on the primary ballot
  - Top 2 will result in less candidates on the primary ballot
  - Would make primaries more appealing to vote in
- Issues
  - Voter/Candidate education
    - Extensive voter and candidate education must be conducted so voters and candidates understand how to vote the ballot and how election results are processed
  - Poll worker training
    - Extensive poll worker training to ensure poll workers understand how Top 2 works
  - Primary ballots will be longer and possibly multiple pages, which will increase costs
  - Used in some elections in three states (CA, NE, WA)
  - Variations are used in Alaska and Louisiana
  - More difficult for third- and minor-party candidates to make it to the general election
  - Will decrease the odds voters will have a choice between candidates from different political parties in the general election
  - Does the write-in option appear on the primary ballot or the general election ballot?

Final Four Hybrid Voting system

- Implementation
  - Final four will result in more candidates on the primary ballot
  - Final four will result in less candidates on the general election ballot
- Issues
  - Same issues listed under the Ranked Choice Voting section

Absolute Majority and runoff elections

- Implementation

- o Will require an additional election to administer
- o Runoff elections will be conducted similar to primaries/general elections
- Issues
  - o Runoff elections are costly
  - o Turnout in runoff elections tend to be lower
  - o Georgia and Louisiana conduct general election runoffs
  - o 10 states conduct primary runoffs

Approval Voting, Single transferable voting (STV)

- Implementation
  - o Vote tabulation software and ballot design software will need to be updated
  - o Consultants/outside groups should be used to implement STV
- Issues
  - o Same issues listed under the Ranked Choice Voting section
  - o Used in local elections in Fargo, ND and St. Louis, MO
  - o Only used in contests where there are multiple winners