



Oakland City Council Approves Instant Runoff Voting; Oakland Rising to Begin Voter Education

In January 2010, the Oakland City Council finally approved Oakland voters' decision to switch to a system of Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), passed as Measure O in 2006 with 69 percent of the vote. The new system of IRV, also known as Ranked Choice Voting will eliminate the June primary election and save the city \$800,000 per year after its initial implementation.

During the City Council meeting, over 70 community members signed up to speak on the agenda item, with an overwhelming majority speaking in favor of IRV. Voices of support included Esperanza Tervalon-Daumont, Director of Oakland Rising who assured the Council that her organization would work to educate Oakland voters to understand the new system when they go to vote in November.

"Oakland Rising is ready, we have been ready and now we are waiting on you. We are waiting for City Council members to show leadership." Tervalon-Daumont stated at the meeting.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) is a voting system for single-winner elections that guarantees majority winners in one round of voting. IRV allows voters to select their choice by ranking candidates in order of preference and is increasingly recognized as a practical and cost-efficient way to replace low-turnout runoff elections.

Oakland Rising has been instrumental in organizing support for IRV and continues to be a leading organization to ensure successful implementation that will be more representative of Oakland's diverse electorate.

Many elections are not decided in the popular November election but in June primaries, when the electorate is less diverse and voter turnout nearly 40% lower. When no candidate wins a June majority, a separate runoff must be held. IRV will combine the June Primary and November Runoff into a single November election ensuring a stronger turn-out from low-income communities and communities of color who do not typically vote in June primaries.

By having the final, decisive election in November, Oakland will take a dramatic step towards enfranchising more communities and improving local democracy. Oakland Rising, who has a proven track record of successfully contacting hard-to-reach voters, has already begun a voter education campaign with a goal of reaching 20,000 voters to explain how IRV works and what to expect for the November 2010 election.

At-A-Glance: How IRV Works

- IRV is a simple to use system that elects the candidate most people most want in a democratic fashion
- Voters rank candidates on their ballot according to preference
- If a candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes, s/he is elected, as in a normal election
- If no candidate has a majority, the lowest-scoring candidate is eliminated and his votes redistributed according to his voters' second-choice candidates
- If a candidate now has a majority, s/he is elected. Otherwise, additional instant "runoff rounds" take place until one candidate has over 50 percent of the votes, and is elected

Learn more at:

<http://www.oaklandrising.org>

<http://www.fairvote.org/instant-runoff-voting>