

<http://www.firv.org>

Sick & Tired of Having Your Vote Wasted?!

“There is a better way: Instant Runoffs.”

- *USA Today*, November 29, 2002

Ferndale
or
Instant
Runoff
Voting

Find out why Ferndale Mayor Robert Porter and Councilman Craig Covey are joining national figures like Governor Howard Dean and Senator John McCain in endorsing Instant Runoff Voting (“**IRV**”) a simple new election system that ensures **YOUR VOTE COUNTS!**

"I would have instant run-off voting, so, when you had more candidates than just two, the person with a majority of votes would win."

– *Democratic Presidential hopeful Howard Dean*

"The **Republican Party of Utah** believes in majority rule. That's why we adopted instant runoff voting for party elections and U.S. Congressional nominations. We are also looking to adopt IRV for state elections."

– *Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff*

"We believe in majority rule. Accordingly, we call for the use of instant runoff voting in chief executive races (mayor, governor, president, etc.) where voters can rank their favorite candidates (1,2,3, etc.) to guarantee that the winner has majority support and that voters aren't relegated to choosing between the "lesser of two evils."

– *Green Party Platform 2000*

IRV "makes possible a more representative result than under a rule that a plurality shall elect" and "...this type of preferential ballot is preferable to an election by plurality..."

– *Robert's Rules of Order*

Ever Feel Like Your Vote Doesn't Really Count?!



How we choose our leaders fundamentally affects every other issue that matters in our communities. Yet, every year American elections are plagued by low turn-out because citizens feel their vote doesn't matter. There are many reasons to feel this way: Faulty machines and ballots such as in Florida in 2000; noncompetitive redistricted races; prohibitive campaign costs; and exclusionary debates that often leave few good choices on the ballot. Our winner-take-all system, in which 51 per cent of the vote wins 100 per cent of the power, can leave 49 per cent of the people unrepresented.

And recent elections have highlighted even deeper problems in how votes are counted:

- **“Spoilers” & plurality winners**

When there are three or more candidates in a race, they split the vote, allowing a candidate without demonstrated majority (>50%) support to win. This occurred in the 2000 presidential election, where votes were split among Al Gore, George W. Bush and Ralph Nader, allowing Bush to win with only 48% of the vote. In 1992, Ross Perot received 18.9% of the vote, allowing Bill Clinton to beat George Bush with only 43% of the vote. This means a leader takes power even though over 50% of the voters voted for someone else. It happens in local, state, and national races throughout America.

- **Strategic voting & wasted votes**

In our current system, voters are often afraid to vote for who they really want to win. They feel that if they vote for a candidate who has little chance of winning, they are wasting their vote, or even helping the candidate that they like least. This idea was captured in 2000 by the refrain “A vote for Nader is a vote for Bush.” Similarly, many felt that a vote for Ross Perot in 1992 or 1996 would actually help their least favorite candidate, Bill Clinton. Therefore, voters compromise and strategically vote for the “lesser of two evils” or worse, simply don't vote at all.

This leaves us with a highly undemocratic system where candidates are discouraged from running for office, voters fear voting for their favorite candidates, and apathy continues to grow.

What is the solution?

Instant Runoff Voting can solve many of these problems and offer a first step towards solving others. It eliminates the spoiler problem, guarantees a majority winner in just one election, and ensures that no votes are wasted. It allows voters to fearlessly vote for the candidate they most want to win, expressing their hopes rather than their fears. It also makes it easier for more and better candidates to run for office, promotes positive issue-based campaigns, discourages mudslinging among candidates who must appeal to broader constituencies, and gathers more complete, precise data about what voters really feel. In the process, it makes voters feel more important, so they vote more often!

What is Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)?

Instant Runoff Voting is a simple to use, full-choice voting method that allows voters to rank their choices on the ballot in order of preference, in contrast with the current system in which they choose only one candidate for each office. Voters label their favorite candidate as 1, their second favorite as 2, and so on, ranking as few or as many choices as they wish.

If on the first count, no candidate has greater than 50% of the first-place votes, the candidate with the least first-place votes is eliminated, and his second-choice votes distributed among the remaining candidates. If a candidate achieves a majority in the second round, he or she is declared the winner. If no majority is achieved, the candidate in last place is again eliminated and the second and third-choice votes again distributed. This process of counting and redistributing votes continues until one candidate reaches greater than 50% support.

Who is F-IRV?

Ferndale for Instant Runoff Voting (F-IRV) is a coalition of citizens, business owners, and organizations from Ferndale, Michigan and the surrounding community who are working to achieve a more fair, effective, and positive full choice system of elections in Ferndale. F-IRV was officially established in October, 2003, and stems from a broader movement for election reform in Michigan known as Michigan Focus on Reforming Elections (M-FORE). M-FORE was created early in 2003 when a diverse group of citizens met in Ferndale to discuss a variety of methods of improving the quality of Michigan's electoral process. In addition to F-IRV, M-FORE has inspired numerous other drives to implement Instant Runoff Voting in localities throughout the state. Both M-FORE and F-IRV are part of a widespread national movement for Instant Runoff Voting throughout the U.S.

Why Ferndale?

In recent elections, Ferndale has experienced one of the lowest voter turnout rates of any city in Oakland County. In the November, 2003 election, over 80% of registered voters failed to vote. In a 2002 election, over 76% didn't vote. And in one 2000 election, a whopping 92% stayed home from the polls. By bringing all of the benefits of an Instant Runoff Voting system to the city, advocates hope to see turnout increase. As a progressive city with a visionary mayor and city council, Ferndale is ripe to serve as an example to other cities in the metro Detroit area, throughout Michigan, and around the country of the benefits of a more fair and effective full choice voting system.

How can we make IRV a reality?

IRV is constitutional in Michigan, and has already been used in the past in Ann Arbor. Therefore, implementing it requires only a change to Ferndale's city charter. A group called Ferndale for Instant Runoff Voting (F-IRV) is working to put a measure on the November, 2004 ballot giving Ferndale's voters the option of using Instant Runoff Voting for mayoral elections in the future. The initiative can be placed on the ballot directly by the city council or by F-IRV itself after obtaining roughly 850 signatures from resident registered voters.

Endorsed By:

National Figures:

- Senator John McCain •
- Former Gov. Howard Dean •
- Congressman Dennis Kucinich •

Media Outlets:

- USA Today and many others •

Members of all major and most minor political parties:
Republican, Democrat, Green,
Libertarian, Socialist.

Important Local Groups:

- Alliance for Democracy •
- Michigan Election Reform Coalition •
- Public Interest Research Group
in Michigan (PIRGIM) •

Local Community Leaders:

- Ferndale Mayor Robert Porter •
- Councilman Craig Covey •
- School Board member
Melissa Hohaus-Thatcher •
- Syndicated columnist Jack
Lessenberry •
- Noted peace activist Al Fishman. •

Hundreds of individuals throughout
Ferndale & Metro Detroit.

Even **Robert's Rules of Order**, says that IRV "makes possible a more representative result than under a rule that a plurality shall elect" and "...this type of ballot is preferable to an election by plurality..."

And in July, 2003 **Ferndale's City Council** voted 5-0 to recommend that Michigan's new voting machines accommodate IRV.

<http://www.firv.org>

How can I learn more & get involved?

Learn more about Instant Runoff Voting, F-IRV, other movements for IRV in Michigan and the U.S., and try IRV for yourself at our web site, above. More information is available at the following sites:

- <http://www.fairvote.org/irv>
Center for Voting and Democracy's IRV page
- <http://www.instantrunoff.com>
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ElectionReformMI/>
email list for those interested in election reform in Michigan.
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/InstantRunoffMI/>
email list for those interested in the drive to implement Instant Runoff Voting in Michigan.
- <http://www.firv.org/inyourtown.html>
Find contacts interested in IRV in communities throughout Michigan and the U.S. or sign up to serve as a contact in your town.

If you or your organization wants to endorse, contribute or volunteer, again please visit our web site.

Newcomers are welcome at our events and weekly meetings.

Contribute!

You may contribute through the mail or online. All contributions over \$20 must be in the form of a check, money order, or online through Paypal. Please make sure to include your name and address with all donations. If you are donating over \$100, state law also requires that you include your occupation, employer, and place of business.

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