



February 6, 2024

Redondo Beach City Council
415 Diamond St.
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Re: Item N.1, Discussion And Possible Action Regarding A Charter Amendment Related To An Instant Runoff Voting System And Authorizing The City Attorney To Prepare An Ordinance Amending The City's Municipal Code To Implement A Voting Method In March 2025.

Dear Mayor Brand and Councilmembers Nehrenheim, Loewenstein, Kaluderovic, Obagi, and Behrend:

On behalf of Californians for Electoral Reform (CfER) and the California Ranked Choice Voting Institute (CalRCV), we write to respond to comments made during the January 23rd, 2024, Redondo Beach City Council meeting discussion of Item N.1.

In particular, City Attorney Michael Webb said, "San Francisco learned that they needed to put a cap on the number of candidates for a particular office because it wouldn't work with more than, I think it was, more than 10 candidates." This is not true; ranked-choice voting (RCV) in general, and San Francisco in particular, puts no limit on the number of candidates that can run for a given office. Implementations of ranked-choice voting can, however, place a limit as to how many candidates a voter can rank. We believe that the City Attorney is confusing a limit on the number of rankings a voter may make with a non-existent limit on the number of candidates that might be running for office.

When San Francisco first implemented ranked-choice voting in 2004, the Sequoia equipment they used limited voters to ranking three candidates, but all the candidates were listed on the ballot. In 2019 they changed to Dominion Voting Systems equipment which limits voters to ten rankings. We have heard but do not know for a fact that the Hart Intercivic equipment in Redondo Beach has a limit of six rankings.

Taking a look at Redondo Beach elections going back to 2005, we did not find a single-winner contest that had more than five candidates (five candidates for Mayor in 2017, five candidates for District 3 in 2015), so the ability to rank six candidates should be sufficient for practically all of your elections. Needless to say, the limit on rankings does not place a limit on the number of

candidates that can run. Mr. Webb also spoke from his experience as a former candidate. We note that when he was first elected City Attorney in 2005, there were four candidates in the March election. He received 49.7% of the vote and the second-place finisher received 25.5% of the vote. (Mr. Webb missed getting a majority by 30 votes.) He easily won the May runoff, 67% to 33%. We are sure that if that March election had used ranked-choice voting, Mr. Webb would have picked up at least 30 votes when the last-place candidate was eliminated and he wouldn't have had to compete in a runoff election.

He also referred to himself as the father of a former ASB President and couldn't imagine the students using it. Students in Ireland and Australia use ranked-choice voting in their school elections because their countries use it in their public elections, and it would be worthwhile to have ASB use it in their elections this Spring so they can teach their parents how to use it next year.

Councilmember Nehrenheim asked if there were different types of ranked-choice voting. While there are many different systems that use a ranked ballot, the phrase "ranked choice voting" specifically means only two of them: the single-winner system that electoral reformers used to call instant runoff voting and political scientists call the Alternative Vote, and the proportional multi-winner system that political scientists call the Single Transferable Vote. (Depending on context, RCV by itself usually refers to the single-winner system, with the multi-winner system distinguished by calling it proportional RCV or PRCV.) Single-winner RCV is what would be used for the City Council and other single-winner offices in Redondo Beach. PRCV is what the school board could use if it decided it wanted to change from at-large plurality.

Councilmember Nehrenheim also mentioned the possibility of using STAR Voting. At the January 11, 2022 council meeting, Mr. Chessin showed how STAR Voting can violate majority rule, along with other defects that it has. And as Ms. Manzano pointed out, there is no voting equipment certified for STAR Voting, so the ballots would have to be tallied by hand.

Please feel free to use our organizations as a resource to answer any questions that may arise as you work to implement ranked-choice voting.

Sincerely,

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CC: City Clerk Eleanor Manzano
City Attorney Michael Webb