

# Ranked Choice Voting FAQ

## Salt Lake City

### Quick bullet points:

- Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to select candidates in preferential order
- In Salt Lake City, voters will be able to rank up to 10 candidates
  - For example – if there are 10 candidates there are 10 preference rankings; if there are 5 candidates, only 5 preference rankings will be listed.
- Date Changes:
  - There will be no Primary Election
  - Declaration of Candidacy period has moved from June 1-7 to August 10-17. (When candidates formally declare their intent to run for office, this action could officially place the candidates name on the ballot)
  - The General Election (Election Day) remains on November 2, 2021.
  - Early voting could begin around October 19, 2021, please refer to the City Recorder and Salt Lake County's website for more information closer to the date.
  - Mail-in Ballots will begin being mailed out the week of October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- Individuals interested in being placed on the ballot, may begin campaigning at any point of an election cycle so long as they open a Personal Campaign Committee with the Recorder's office for the purposes of raising or spending funds.

### What is Ranked Choice Voting?

Ranked Choice Voting (also known as Instant Runoff Voting) can be used (or is best used) for single-winner elected positions. The practice was used in the 2019 Municipal Elections for the Utah cities of Vineyard and Payson. The method decreases the splitting of the vote (choosing one over the other).

Voters may select candidates in their preferred order, instead of simply voting against the candidate with whom the voter disagrees. In Salt Lake City, voters will be able to rank up to 10 (depending on how many Declare Candidacy in August).

### How does it work?

Ballots are printed with the names listed and 10 ranking positions; voters rank the candidates by filling in the bubble in the appropriate column with the preferred ranking.

The ranking will be determined based on the following:

- If a candidate has received more than 50% of the overall vote, they are automatically declared the winner of the single-seat race
- If none of the candidates receive more than 50% of the overall vote, the candidate with the lowest percentage of overall votes is eliminated, and those who had the eliminated candidate selected as their first choice will now have their votes counted for the candidate they chose as their second preference. This process of elimination continues until a candidate crosses the 50% threshold and is declared the winner.

**What order will the candidates be in?**

Candidates are positioned in order of the Master Ballot Position List, which is established on even numbered election years by the Lieutenant Governor's Office in accordance with §20A-6-305. For more information on this process please visit this link:

<https://voteinfo.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2020/04/2020-2021-Master-Ballot-Position-List.pdf>

Additionally, here is the current Master Ballot Position List and the order that the 2021 ballot will be in:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
P	U	Z	E	K	W	B	D	N	O	A	S	R
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
J	F	V	C	M	Q	H	I	Y	G	X	L	T

Candidates are listed in the above order with the following parameters guiding their position on the ballot:

- The candidate's surnames as it is written on their Declaration of Candidacy.
- If two or more candidates have surnames that begin with the same letter, the list shall be applied to each subsequent letter in the candidates' surnames.
- If two or more candidates have an identical surname, the list shall be applied to the candidates' given (first) names.

**What happens if the voter chooses only one candidate?**

If the voter only chooses one candidate, then if during the elimination period that candidate is eliminated, their vote would not transfer to their second choice. Essentially, ranking more than one candidate can be viewed almost as having a back-up.

### **What happens if there is a tie?**

Ties are broken by lot in Utah (e.g. flip a coin, draw straws, etc.) It's the same for Ranked Choice Voting, so if two candidates still tie, the election administrator (The City Recorder's Office) will bring both candidates in, everyone will agree on a tie-breaker and then the candidate who wins the coin flip (or whatever method is chosen), will be declared the winner.

### **Will it take longer to see results?**

No. The time period for results remains the same amount of time in state statute. Cities will have 2 weeks to canvass the election from the date of the election, and the last day for the board of canvassers to meet is November 16, 2021. What may be different to prior elections are how the results will look on a daily basis. Where RCV may eliminate candidates in rounds, the results may favor one candidate but as one is eliminated, the votes where the eliminated candidate was ranked as the voters first choice will then be transferred to their second favorite candidate. This could cause the period where ballots are being counted to show different candidates in the lead on a day-to-day basis.

### **What will my ballot look like?**

Ballots will be printed by the Salt Lake County Clerk's Office who is contracting with the City on this year's election. They will provide a sample ballot to the city further along in the process and it will be posted publicly.

### **Will it still be a vote-by-mail election?**

Yes. The State of Utah is an entirely vote-by-mail state. However, cities and counties may provide in-person polling locations; these will be determined by Salt Lake County and will be posted on their website and on the City Recorder's website closer to the General Election.

### **Why is RCV better?**

Ranked Choice Voting is seen as better by some voters and election administrators because it gives the voter a larger say in the final candidate, as they are ranked and

eliminated based on the overall rankings of all voters. Additionally, Ranked Choice Voting often saves municipalities money due to the lack of a Primary Election.

### **How does this change the election timeline?**

The timeline has a few changes throughout; however, the General Election remains the same and Election Day will still take place on November 2, 2021. Where the Primary Election was eliminated this will move the Declaration of Candidacy period from early June to August 10-17. Besides that, no large timelines change that can affect voters.

### **Does the time period change effect candidates?**

Yes and no. Overall candidates can begin campaigning now and continue campaigning up to the General Election. The formal period for declaring candidacy is August 10-17 at 5:00pm. So, while the declaration period moves from June to August, it does not prohibit them from beginning to campaign. The only necessary thing for candidates to do immediately if they wish to raise or spend funds is to open a Personal Campaign Committee with the City Recorder's Office which essentially requires candidates to report how they are raising and spending funds.

### **Why is there no Primary Election?**

The City Council voted against a Primary Election in Ranked Choice. While their decision is due to a variety of reasons, some of the pros to not having a Primary Election under RCV are:

1) that it lowers the cost of the overall election.

2) if a municipality does Ranked Choice Voting during a Primary Election, only two candidates go through to the General Election and would be voted on using the traditional voting method (which can create confusion for voters).

### **Do other cities or states (besides Salt Lake City) do this?**

Yes! In 2019, Utah cities Payson and Vineyard both did Ranked Choice Voting. In 2021, the following cities in Utah are doing Ranked Choice Voting:

- South Salt Lake
- Bluffdale
- Draper
- Lehi
- Payson
- Riverton
- Springville
- Vineyard
- Goshen
- Newton
- Woodland Hills
- Genola

- Sandy
- Nibley City
- Millcreek
- Heber City

Other cities and states outside of Utah do it too! RCV is most used by cities for local elections. However, Maine uses it at a state level.

### **Does this impact Salt Lake City's budget and how?**

Yes, it saves us money! By switching to Ranked Choice Voting without a Primary Election, the cost of the election has been almost cut in half! Some of the leftover funding that was allocated for elections will be used to create awareness throughout the City so that voters will be more familiar and ready to vote in November.

**Have more questions about Ranked Choice Voting? Great! Send them to [elections@slcgov.com](mailto:elections@slcgov.com) and the most commonly asked ones will be added to this FAQ.**