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Horror Stories: Democrats' Confusing, Complex & Costly Ranked-Choice Voting Scheme Backhanded Attempt to Cement Left-Wing Power

RCV deceptively maneuvers Left-leaning politicians into elected office. During the November 2023 election in Colorado, "[t]he city of Boulder, a bastion of progressive politics, hub for Democratic socialism and ivory tower of liberal ideology, almost elected a former Republican as mayor," [Axios](#) reported. But "then ranked choice voting came into play."

RCV consolidated the second-place votes from a Democratic Socialists of America-backed third-place challenger behind the incumbent liberal Democrat, who "acknowledged that without ranked choice voting, he may no longer be mayor. "Certainly ranked choice is very different from a plurality winner" system, he said.

"Ranked choice voting really made a difference and changed the outcome of our mayor's election," insisted the third-place finisher. "What ranked choice voting allowed us to get was someone who is a more center-left candidate."

RCV has been an unmitigated disaster when implemented in public elections. *POLITICO* reported that RCV [led to chaos and confusion](#) among voters in New York City's 2021 election, which went two weeks without a winner. "The darling of the wealthy, liberal elite, ranked-choice voting was used for the first time in New York's primary and now it's an unmitigated disaster, with mistakes plaguing the count and voters still in the dark about which candidate won, a week after the contest," one Boston Herald [columnist wrote](#).

It took a week of counting and 11 rounds of tabulations before city officials [determined](#) that 135,000 test ballots had been counted by mistake, as well as nearly a month and eight rounds of counting before a winner was ultimately declared.

Nearly two months after the November 2022 election, Alameda County in California announced that it systematically counted the ballots incorrectly.

"Oops. The error didn't affect the outcome in most races, but it flipped a seat on the Oakland School Board, and now the question is what to do about the certified winner who actually lost and the third-place finisher who won," the *Wall Street Journal* [Editorial Board wrote](#). "Blame the mess on official incompetence, but reserve some ire for ranked-choice voting, a system that makes it complicated even to explain the mistake."

RCV fails to deliver on its promises. Officials in Utah have [reported numerous concerns](#) with the state's nascent pilot program, with several jurisdictions reporting that promised cost savings have not materialized, voter engagement has fallen, and even engaged citizens have struggled to adapt to RCV. In fact, voters are being disenfranchised because many ballots are

not being counted due to errors made in the ranking process. In the Genola City Council Race 1 in 2021, 58% of ballots were either discarded out of hand or otherwise spoiled, while City Council Race 2 had a discarded or spoiled rate of over 74%.

An April 2023 [report published](#) by University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs found that a careful review of RCV "fails to support four of the advocates' promises for improvements over today's system." The report concluded that supporters of the RCV falsely claim that the practice will reduce polarization of major political parties (RCV actually increased animosity among Democrats and Republicans), increase the diversity of elected government officials, increase voter turnout and engagement of minority voters, and decrease negative campaigning.

Importantly, evidence shows "no difference in turnout in cities using RCV compared to those using the current system. They report errors, confusion, and lower turnout due to the greater complexity of RCV and its process of ranking candidates and tabulating multiple rounds of voting."

RCV puts elections and voter confidence at risk. An Oakland, California school board race that used RCV recently [certified the wrong winner](#). Hundreds of voters failed to list a first-choice candidate and officials failed to tabulate those ballots properly under the law. Worse still, the mistake was not caught by government officials—it took an audit by outside experts to find the problem. By then the wrong winner had been certified, forcing the true winner to file a lawsuit to be recognized.

Following the 2022 Oakland, California mayoral race, Oakland NAACP [demanded a recount](#) saying that confusion over RCV led thousands of voters to select more than one candidate in the same ranking or submit ballots with no rankings at all. "I gotta make all these choices...Now I'm confused as hell and I'm trying to explain this to my neighbors," Oakland NAACP member Richard Breaux said.

Dr. Allie Whitehurst, Oakland NAACP Political Action Chair, is also [critical of RCV](#). "The leader who everyone thought might be the winner led up until the eighth round, and so it's very confusing," said Whitehurst.

According to mayoral candidate Seneca Scott, voters were once again misinformed when they went to the polls. "It should trigger an automatic recount after the amount of miseducation done by elected officials and the city clerk's office in an election that was decided by just over one-half a percent," Scott said.

This year Arlington, Virginia recently [hit brakes](#) on RCV after being the first municipality in the state to use it for the city's June primary.

"...[T]he County Board opted not to implement ranked-choice voting in its general elections for board seats in November, pointing to confusion about the process...," [Virginia Mercury](#) reported. "There are a whole lot of people where maybe their second votes never count," said one board member.

RCV makes voting more difficult and may discourage people from voting at all. RCV raises the burden on voters, requiring them to know enough to rank multiple candidates in each race. Evidence suggests this added complexity discourages voting. For example, Alaska's 2022 general election had an extraordinarily low turnout—particularly among low-income, low-propensity, and minority voters.

The Alaska Supreme Court [recently ruled](#) that the state's Division of Elections improperly removed an independent candidate for U.S. House, Al Gross, from last year's confusing special election ballot. Gross withdrew from the race after finishing third among 48 candidates in the ranked-choice special primary election. Democrat Mary Peltola, who finished fourth behind Gross, went on to win both the ranked-choice special election in August and the ranked-choice regular general election in November.

Gross' withdrawal has still not been explained, and the division advanced only three candidates to the four-person ranked-choice special election after removing Gross from the ballot. The court concluded that Gross' removal violated state law, stating, "had the Division strictly followed the law, Dr. Gross's name should have remained on the special general election ballot."

This D.C. Democrat party [rejected](#) RCV this year for use in municipal elections, arguing it would disenfranchise minority voters and introduce covertly open primaries "that could undermine the rights of registered Democrats to choose their nominees for public office."

"We firmly believe that every voter, regardless of party affiliation or independent status, should have the right to freely choose their preferred candidate," the party said. "The current electoral system in the District ensures that no one is disenfranchised, providing ample choices for voters to engage with the political process and participate in the general election."

D.C. Democrats even [filed a lawsuit](#) to keep RCV off the ballot, maintaining that it violates the U.S. Constitution and Home Rule charter, specifically voters' rights to freely associate with a political party protected by the First and Fifth amendments, and discriminates against minority voters.

"Allowing 80,000 non-affiliated voters to participate in partisan elections would undermine the intent of the Charter and dilute the votes of party members who seek to nominate party candidates to stand in subsequent general elections," the suit reads. "Defendants' discrimination, intentional or not, has caused and will cause ongoing harm to Plaintiffs and other residents..."

RCV reduces transparency and makes recounts more difficult. RCV turns tabulation into a black box, making it harder for voters to track the process, harder for officials to catch mistakes, and makes recounts in close races even more difficult.

RCV risks unnecessary election delays, particularly in close races. The added difficulty of tabulating RCV elections and recounting close races risks delaying election results.

RCV fails to deliver true majorities. When voters do not rank enough candidates, their ballots are thrown out due to “ballot exhaustion,” the term used to describe when voters select only one candidate on their ballot, and those ballots are discarded because their first choice didn’t win a majority in the first round. Often, so many ballots are thrown out that candidates only win a majority of the remaining votes, but not a majority of all votes cast.

In Alaska, Democrat Mary Peltola won the state’s at-large congressional seat in 2022 even though nearly 60 percent of voters cast their ballots for a Republican. This race also saw nearly 15,000 votes [discarded](#) due to so-called “ballot exhaustion,” of which more than 11,000 were from voters who voted for only one Republican candidate and no one else.

RCV also played a major role in helping Alaska GOP Sen. Lisa Murkowski [fend off](#) a challenge from conservative challenger Kelly Tshibaka during the 2022 midterms, which reportedly saw the lowest voter turnout percentage on record. The system allowed Murkowski to win due to being listed second on Alaska Democrats’ ranked-choice ballots.

In a 2018 Maine congressional race, then-incumbent GOP Rep. Bruce Poliquin lost to Democrat Jared Golden despite Poliquin winning the most votes in the first round of voting. More than 8,000 ballots were deemed “exhausted” and effectively [thrown out](#).