

P-6	Instant Runoff Voting	David Rose	Article 4, Sections 4.10 & 4.20
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This is Rank Choice Voting. Would align with other liberal cities like Seattle and San Francisco.

Sponsor of Proposal

David Rose

Brief Summary of Proposal:

This proposal establishes Instant Runoff Voting as the standard voting method in all elections for County offices, eliminates partisan primary elections for all County offices, and puts limitations on material support that the County can provide to political parties in selecting candidates for the ballot.

Proposed Charter Amendment:

4.10 Election Procedures

~~The nominating primaries and elections of the Councilmembers and Executive shall be conducted in accordance with general law governing the election of partisan county officers. The Prosecuting Attorney shall be a nonpartisan office, elected by the voters of Pierce County.*~~

~~The elections of all County officials, including judges and the Prosecuting Attorney, shall be conducted according to the state election method.~~

- 1) The elections of all County officials shall, to the greatest extent allowable by state and federal law, be conducted using Instant Runoff Voting according to the following guidelines:
 - a) The ballot shall allow voters to rank all candidates in order of preference.
 - b) Votes shall be counted in rounds. The candidate with the fewest votes in each round shall be eliminated and each of their ballots shall be redistributed as one whole vote to the highest-ranked remaining candidate on each respective ballot.
 - c) Any candidate having received the majority, fifty percent plus one, of votes cast, or the candidate having received the greatest

number of votes when two or fewer candidates remain, shall be elected.

- 2) The County Council may, in order to implement Instant Runoff Voting consistent with this subsection and applicable law, establish the following:
 - a) Qualifications for candidates to be placed on the Instant Runoff general election ballot.
 - b) Criteria for the selection of party candidates in partisan elections.
 - c) Limits on the number of candidates that can appear on a ballot, provided that the limit be no less than five, and that preference not be afforded to any candidate or candidates based on party affiliation.
 - d) Whether and how the County may conduct primary elections in nonpartisan elections, provided that any nonpartisan primary election must allow no fewer than five qualified candidates to advance to the general election ballot.

- 3) The County Auditor shall implement Instant Runoff Voting in the soonest general election at least six months after this section shall become law.

4.20 ~~Independent Candidates~~ Partisan and Nonpartisan Elections, Offices, and Primaries

- 1) The elections of the Councilmembers, Executive, and Charter Review Commissioners may be conducted in a partisan manner, in accordance with general law governing the election of partisan County officers, except where such law conflicts with the Election Procedures contained in this Charter. For elections to County offices, the County shall conduct no primary on behalf of a political party and shall expend no resources to aid a political party in selecting a candidate or candidates.

- 2) The Prosecuting Attorney shall be a nonpartisan office, elected by the voters of Pierce County. All other elective offices of the County shall be nonpartisan offices unless otherwise specified in this charter. Nonpartisan offices shall be elected in accordance with general law governing the election of nonpartisan County officers except where such law conflicts with the Election Procedures

contained in this Charter.

Rationale for Proposal:

Plurality-Wins voting reduces representation and promotes divisiveness by locking our community into the two-party system. Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) eliminates the spoiler effect, thereby enabling a greater diversity of candidates to run for office, and empowering voters to choose candidates based on their own values rather than a candidate's viability. IRV significantly reduces the chances of electing a candidate without consensus support. It also encourages positive campaigning because with more than two candidates on the ballot, simply vilifying your opponent is less likely to earn a high preference. This amendment also reduces the stranglehold of the two-party system and saves substantial tax dollars by limiting the resources the County is allowed to expend in support of political parties and eliminating County-run partisan primaries.

DPA Review of Proposal

Date:

4/15/2026

Proposal No.:

P-6

Topic:

Instant Runoff Voting

DPA:

Katie Blinn

Legal Review:

The proposal requires that the election of all County officials be conducted using Instant Runoff Voting. The proposal strikes from Section 4.10 the sentence establishing that the election of judges and the Prosecuting Attorney be conducted according to State election methods. However, the State Constitution states in Article XI, Section 4, “Any home rule charter proposed as herein provided ... shall not affect the election of the prosecuting attorney, ... the judges of the superior court, and the justices of the peace, or the jurisdiction of the courts.” In addition, the State Constitution establishes in Article IV, Section 29, that in counties of at least 100,000 people (which includes Pierce County), if there is only one candidate for a Superior Court position, no primary or general election shall be held for that position, and a certificate of election shall be issued.

Changing the method of election of the Prosecuting Attorney, Superior Court judges and District Court judges may conflict with provisions of the State Constitution and exceed the authority of a charter county.

Other Feedback/Comments/Recommendations:

Section 4.10(1)(c) states:

c) Any candidate having received the majority, fifty percent plus one, of votes cast, or the candidate having received the greatest number of votes when two or fewer candidates remain, shall be elected.

Consider using “majority” rather than “fifty percent plus one.” For example, a majority of 21 votes cast is 11, which is less than 50% plus one.

Section 4.20 states that Councilmembers, the Executive and Charter Review Commissioners are partisan office, Prosecuting Attorney is nonpartisan office, and “All other elective offices of the County shall be nonpartisan unless otherwise specified in this charter.” The back and forth is a bit confusing, and Sections 3.50, 3.55 and 3.70 already state that Assessor-Treasurer, Auditor and Sheriff are nonpartisan positions. Consider simplifying the phrasing.

Section 4.20 also states that the partisan and nonpartisan offices “shall be elected in accordance with general law governing the election of [partisan/nonpartisan] County officers except where such law conflicts with the Election Procedures contained in this Charter.” This proposal establishes that the election of County offices is by ranked choice voting so referencing general law governing the election of County officers is confusing. Consider simplifying

the phrasing.

Summary Points

- Attempt in the state legislature [HB 2210](#) failed to even get a vote.
- Complex scheme will confuse voters.
- No other voting system allows for multiple votes. Many will not vote subsequent votes shifting support for candidates they do not support.
- Erodes voter confidence in a fair system
- Allows candidates that do not have majority support to prevail.

See a brief reel by Eric Lundberg on the recent failed attempt by the state legislature here: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1879757519308702>

Good comprehensive article by Nancy Churchill here:
<https://nancydchurchill.substack.com/p/reprint-what-is-ranked-choice-voting>

Submit written testimony

By Email: katey.hobbs@piercecountywa.gov

By Web Form: <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/FormCenter/Charter-Review-41/Provide-Written-Public-Comment-893>

Submitted public testimony

Names in **RED** = CON

Names in **GREEN** = PRO

As of 4-20-26 = **2 CON** ~ **0 PRO**

4-20-26 Packet

Cherie Kuranko

Sunday, April 12, 2026 4:37 PM
Written Public Comment on P-6 Rank Voting

Public Comment on P-6 Proposed Charter Amendment for Instant Runoff Voting (IRV / Ranked Choice Voting)

This proposal must be rejected. Pierce County has already tried Instant Runoff Voting—and it was a complete failure, as well as an expensive lesson. Please hear me out with an open mind. I remember this. I voted for it. I made this mistake. I also voted to repeal it after realizing my mistake.

In 2006, voters narrowly approved IRV (52.93% yes). It was implemented in the 2008 general election, only to be repealed overwhelmingly in 2009 by 70.65% (117,835 yes to repeal vs. 48,942 no). Voters rejected it after direct experience with higher costs (over \$1.6 million extra for equipment, software, double ballots, and education), widespread confusion, and ballots that simply stopped counting.

Studies of the 2008 Pierce County elections showed significant voter error and "exhausted" ballots—where rankings ran out and votes were discarded in later rounds. More than a quarter of voters (33.1%) in some races ranked only one candidate, effectively disenfranchising themselves as the process continued. Link to study is included with this email. The study found the same issues with rank voting in multiple cases across USA and even after more than one election using it.

A county survey sent to voters found 66% saying they did not like the new Ranked Choice Voting system. Due to the confusion, many did not realize how many people's votes would be discarded, exhausted, if we only voted for one or two.

The new 2026 proposal repeats those flaws while making them worse. It requires the ballot to "allow voters to rank all candidates," creating a complex, confusing process that burdens working families, seniors, immigrants, people with disabilities, and communities of color—who may already face barriers to participation. Progressive values demand elections that are accessible and equitable, not a multi-round mathematical exercise that disadvantages low-information or time-strapped voters. Research consistently shows higher exhaustion rates among minority and lower-turnout communities, diluting their electoral influence and undermining the very representation reforms claim to advance.

Even more alarming, the proposal hands the County Council broad new powers to:

Set "qualifications" and "criteria" for candidates on the IRV ballot, Limit the number of candidates (no fewer than five, but still a cap), Control nonpartisan primary rules.

This is not democracy—it is insider gatekeeping that silences independent, grassroots, and progressive challengers who may not appeal to the broad second- or third-choice consensus favored by established interests. Capping the number of candidates is wrong. All should have a right to participate or run for office. True democracy EXPANDS voter choice and protects diverse voices, especially those

fighting for justice, environmental protection, and economic equity. Limiting the field and letting officials decide who "qualifies" concentrates power in the hands of the few and tramples the rights of everyday voters to decide.

If you only want to support one strong candidate, your vote risks exhausting early while others transfer repeatedly—creating UNEQUAL influence and manufactured majorities that do not reflect first-choice support.

As a lifelong Pierce County resident and voter who still vividly remembers the confusing and horrible experience of the previous ranked choice voting attempt, I urge you to reject this proposal.

I will not vote using ranked choice voting again. It left me feeling disenfranchised and deeply distrustful of the process. It is confusing. I can see where some people with more knowledge of how it works could easily manipulate it.

I want fair, simple, and transparent elections for everyone in our community—not a system that complicates participation and dilutes real democratic power. Please honor the clear will of Pierce County voters from 2009 and preserve accessible, equitable elections that truly serve all residents. Rank voting hits the most disadvantaged people the hardest.

Let's learn from our mistakes of the past and not repeat them. Thank you for your time and consideration. Rank Voting Study:

[Ballot \(and voter\) "exhaustion" under Instant Runoff Voting: An examination of four ranked-choice elections - ScienceDirect](#)

Cherie Kuranko

Sunday, April 12, 2026 7:11 AM

Public Comment on Proposed Charter Amendment P-6 for Instant Runoff Voting (IRV / Ranked Choice Voting)

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votes were discarded in later rounds. More than a quarter of voters in some races ranked only one candidate, effectively disenfranchising themselves as the process continued. A county survey sent to voters found 66% saying they did not like the new Ranked Choice Voting system.

This new 2026 proposal repeats those flaws while making them worse. It requires the ballot to "allow voters to rank all candidates," creating a complex, confusing process that burdens working families, seniors, immigrants, people with disabilities, and communities of color—who may already face barriers to participation. Progressive values demand elections that are accessible and equitable, not a multi-round mathematical exercise that disadvantages low-information or time-strapped voters. Research consistently shows higher exhaustion rates among minority and lower-turnout communities, diluting their electoral influence and undermining the very representation reforms claim to advance.

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Limit the number of candidates (no fewer than five, but still a cap),
Control nonpartisan primary rules.

This is not democracy—it is insider gatekeeping that silences independent, grassroots, and progressive challengers who may not appeal to the broad second- or third-choice consensus favored by established interests. True democracy expands voter choice and protects diverse voices, especially those fighting for justice, environmental protection, and economic equity. Limiting the field and letting officials decide who "qualifies" concentrates power in the hands of the few and tramples the rights of everyday voters to decide.

If you only want to support one strong progressive candidate, your vote risks exhausting early while others transfer repeatedly—creating unequal influence and manufactured majorities that do not reflect first-choice support.

As a lifelong Pierce County resident and voter who still vividly

remembers the confusing and horrible experience of the previous ranked choice voting attempt, I urge you to reject this proposal. I will not vote using it again. It left me feeling disenfranchised and deeply distrustful of the process. I want fair, simple, and transparent elections for everyone in our community—not a system that complicates participation and dilutes real democratic power.

Please honor the clear will of Pierce County voters from 2009 and preserve accessible, equitable elections that truly serve all residents. Please do not make the same costly mistake of our past. Learn from it.
