

Instant Runoff Voting in Primaries

Background:

The Democratic Party is built upon the fundamental principles of inclusion, transparency, openness, and equal access to the ballot for all voters. The Party seeks to nominate candidates with broad appeal and a strong chance of winning in the general election.

In several jurisdictions across the Commonwealth of Virginia, local Democratic organizations opted to use instant run-off voting (IRV) to count votes in caucuses. Under IRV, voters rank one or more candidates that they support in order of preference. The candidate with the lowest number of votes is dropped from the election and his votes are passed along to their next choice, until finally one candidate gets a majority of the remaining votes. However, current Virginia law does not allow jurisdictions to use IRV in primaries. In both a primary or a caucus, absent IRV, the person with the most votes is the party's nominee even if that candidate attracted a small portion of the total vote and represents views incompatible with a majority of the party or of the voters in the general election. When many candidates are seeking the party's nomination, or there is a low voter turnout, the process may not serve the interests of the party or of the voters.

Therefore, be it resolved that, the 2017 Eighth District Democratic Convention recommends that Section 24.2-532 of the Code of Virginia be amended to provide local parties the option of specifying that a primary should be conducted using either IRV or the current one-round method.