

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed
Vote:	6 - 1 - 0
Yeas:	Berger, Buckley, Hunt, Roblan, Thatcher, Rosenbaum
Nays:	Esquivel
Exc.:	-
Prepared By:	Jim Stenbridge, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	3/14, 3/26

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Authorizes city, county, or metropolitan service district to use instant-runoff voting system for local candidate elections. Requires instant-runoff system to provide electors the opportunity to designate first-, second-, and third-choices, transferring second and third choices to remaining candidates as each lowest-vote candidate is eliminated, in turn, until one candidate has a majority of votes. Requires jurisdiction choosing to use instant-runoff voting to bear the cost of the election.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- “Spoiler” effect of third-party and independent candidates and so-called “wasted” votes
- Jurisdictions currently using instant-runoff voting
- Costs of implementing the system, including vote-tally machinery, ballot printing, separate processing
- Delays in results due to extra vote-counting effort
- Voter confusion with new systems
- Recent local election results in the City of Ashland; other races won by plurality rather than majority
- Preference voting provision of the Oregon Constitution (Art II, Sec 16)
- Effect on negative campaigning

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Deletes requirement that county clerks use ballot designed by the Secretary of State. Deletes requirement that Secretary of State approve purchase of only voting machines capable of accommodating instant runoff voting. Clarifies that ballots cast for all eliminated candidates are to be transferred to remaining candidate preferences. Adds metropolitan service district to public entities eligible to use instant runoff voting.

BACKGROUND: According to an instant voting runoff website (<http://www.instantrunoff.com/irv.asp>), instant runoff voting guarantees that the winning candidate will have a majority vote (instead of a plurality), eliminating the "wasted vote syndrome" of third-party candidates. Because voters to rank the candidates by preference on a single ballot (first, second, third choice, etc.), if no candidate has a majority of the votes, a runoff recount can be conducted without a new election to determine which candidate is actually preferred by a majority of voters.

The Oregon Constitution, inserted by 1908 initiative (Article II, Section 16), provides that “Provision may be made by law for the voter’s direct or indirect expression of his first, second or additional choices among the candidates for any office. For an office which is filled by the election of one person it may be required by law that the person elected shall be the final choice of a majority of the electors voting for candidates for that office. These principles may be applied by law to nominations by political parties and organizations.”

San Francisco, California; Burlington, Vermont; Ireland; and Australia are said to be using instant runoff voting. Instant runoff voting was approved in Oakland, California; Pierce County, Washington; and Minneapolis, Minnesota in November 2006.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.