



# COMPLIANCE GUIDE TO RANKED CHOICE VOTING

## INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR CITY OFFICE

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) was implemented in 2021 for primary and special elections for New York City mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough president, and City Council member. It will not be used in general elections. For primaries and specials, RCV changes the way people vote, and candidates may choose to campaign in new ways.

### NEW WAY OF VOTING

Before 2021, in a primary or special election, voters chose one candidate. In a City Council or borough president race, the candidate with the most votes won, even if that meant a winner who received far less than a majority of votes. For citywide primaries and mayoral special elections, if no candidate received at least 40% of the vote, a runoff election was held between the top two candidates.

With RCV, runoffs are eliminated. **Voters can rank up to five candidates in order of preference**, instead of choosing just one. If a candidate receives more than 50% of first-choice votes, they win the election. If no candidate earns more than 50% of first-choice votes, then counting continues in rounds. At the end of each round, the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. On ballots where the top-choice candidate is eliminated, the vote goes to the next highest ranked candidate on the ballot. This process continues until there are only two candidates left, and the candidate with the most votes wins. Learn more about RCV elections and the tabulation process [here](#).

### CAMPAIGNING IN RCV ELECTIONS

Primary and special election campaigns may look different under RCV. Previously, voters had just one choice per race, and candidates competed for that one choice. Under RCV, because voters can rank up to five candidates in order of preference, candidates may choose to campaign not only for first-choice votes, but also second-choice, third-choice, and lower-ranked choices.

Supporting and/or campaigning with opponents will **not** jeopardize your eligibility for public funds **so long as you are also promoting your own candidacy**, even if you are seeking lower-ranked votes.

- ◆ **Educate your supporters about RCV.** Share NYC Votes' [Ranked Choice Voting](#) page and [FAQs](#) with your supporters for clear and comprehensive information about RCV, including instructions for voters on how to fill out an RCV ballot. Remind voters to rank each candidate only once because only the highest rank vote for a candidate will count. Also remind them to choose only one candidate per rank because choosing multiple candidates for one rank can invalidate their ballot.

- ◆ **Think about how you will campaign. How you campaign is up to you.** You can campaign solely for firstchoice votes, you can campaign for lower rank votes, or you can campaign for a combination of rankings.
- ◆ **Remember that on election night, the unofficial results are incomplete.** The mailed-in ballots, including absentee, military, and overseas ballots, arrive in the days after the election and must be received and counted before the final election results can be certified by the New York City Board of Elections.

## COMPLIANCE ALERTS

- ◆ **You can support one or more of your opponents.**
  - › In an RCV race, so long as you are promoting your own candidacy, campaigning with, or supporting, your opponents will not jeopardize your eligibility for public funds.
  - › However, if you promote an opponent’s campaign without continuing to promote yourself, you will lose your eligibility for public funds.
- ◆ **If you campaign with opponents, decide whether to split expenditures.** In an RCV election if an expenditure will benefit both your campaign and an opponent’s campaign:
  - › You can choose to pay for it yourself as a direct campaign expenditure. List only your campaign on any paid-for-by notice and document the expenditure according to the requirements found in the [Campaign Finance Handbook](#). The CFB will not presume that candidates who support each other in RCV elections are engaged in joint expenditures.
  - › You can choose to split the expenditure with another campaign as a joint expenditure. List all participating campaigns on any paid-for-by notice, split the costs fairly based on the benefit each campaign receives, document why the split is fair, and make sure each campaign pays the correct amount.
  - › If you publicly support an opponent for Rank 1 and yourself for a lower rank in any of your campaign’s written and paid materials, you must attribute part of the cost(s) to the other campaign, either as a joint or independent expenditure. An independent expenditure may result in a public funds deduction for your campaign. See Chapter 3 of the [Campaign Finance Handbook](#) or contact your Candidate Services Liaison for additional guidance.

## ENJOY CAMPAIGNING UNDER RCV!

RCV can allow you to connect with and gain support from voters who otherwise may not have supported your candidacy. The CFB’s RCV educational materials for voters can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions about RCV and how it impacts your campaign’s compliance or public funds, please contact [CandidateServices@nyccfb.info](mailto:CandidateServices@nyccfb.info).

04/14/2021