Electoral Innovation and the Alaska System:

Partisanship and Populism Are Associated with Support for Top-4/Ranked-Choice Voting Rules

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Abstract:

In 2020 Alaskans voted to adopt a nonpartisan top-4 primary followed by a ranked-choice general election. Proposals for "final four" and "final five" election systems are being considered in other states, as well as ranked-choice voting. The initial use of Alaska's procedure in 2022 serves as a test case for examining whether such reforms may help moderate candidates avoid being "primaried." In 2022, incumbent Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski held her seat against a Trump-endorsed Republican, Kelly Tshibaka. We use data from the 2022 election in Alaska, along with a mixed-mode survey of Alaskan voters before the general election, to test hypotheses about how voters behave in these kinds of elections, finding: (1) the moderate Republican candidate, Murkowski, likely would have lost a closed partisan primary; (2) some Democrats and independents favored the moderate Republican over the candidate of their own party, and the new rules allowed them to support her at all stages of the election, along with others who voted for her to stop the more conservative Republican candidate; and (3) that Alaskan voters are largely favorable towards the new rules, but that certain kinds of populist voters are likely to both support Trump and oppose the rules.

Over the last decade, political scientists have expressed considerable alarm about the threat polarization and rising populism pose for American political institutions, warning that the fabric of American democracy "can tatter only so long before it rips" (McCarty 2019, 167). Some reform advocates aim to reduce polarization and political dysfunction by modifying election rules and, in particular, by reducing the risk that elected officials are "primaried" as partisan punishment for moderate policy preferences or cross-party compromise. Yet, scholarly research has arrived at mixed conclusions about whether primary election reforms produce the desired results (McGhee et al. 2014; Masket 2016; Hirano and Snyder 2019, 296; McCarty 2019, 118; Rackaway and Romance 2022; Grose 2020; Barton 2023). In 2020, Alaska adopted one of the latest innovations of this kind, Ballot Measure 2, instituting a novel top-4 "pick one" primary followed by a ranked-choice general election (a "top-4/RCV" system). There is little research on voter behavior and election outcomes using this new system. We examine the impact of the top 4/RCV procedures on the outcome of Alaska's high-profile 2022 U.S. Senate election, voter behavior under this system, and voter support for the new institutions.

The Alaska rule uses the single-vote primary to reduce the field of choices available in the ranked-choice general election. In the primary, voters express only one preference, with all of the alternatives for each office presented as part of a common pool of candidates. The four candidates receiving the most votes advance. In the general election, voters may rank those four candidates. In the ranked-choice portion, votes for each worst-performing candidate are reallocated to the next-ranked among the remaining set of candidates until candidate earns over half of the vote. In 2022, the top-4/RCV electoral system was used for elections to federal and state offices for the first time. The U.S. Senate election featured multiple candidates on the general election ballot, including two serious contenders from the same party: Lisa Murkowski, the incumbent Republican, and Kelly

Tshibaka, a challenger endorsed by former President Donald Trump. This general election was an early test of the expectations motivating many advocates of these types of reforms.

Alaska's top-4/RCV system is a nonpartisan election reform related to, but more complex than, the top-2 systems in California and Washington. Scholars have studied the top-2, but there has been little systematic analysis of this new Alaska process. Other states, like Nevada (Clyde 2022; Gehl and Porter 2020), are considering adopting similar rules, including a top-5/RCV alternative ("final five"). An early look at the primary stage of the Alaska election has suggested it may help advance moderates (Anderson et al. 2023), but the general election dynamics are important to evaluate as well. It is particularly important to study the general election stage of these top-4/RCV systems because so few serious candidates are eliminated in the primary.

For our study we use official election returns and survey data to study the first use of the top-4/RCV rule in Alaska, particularly emphasizing the statewide general election contests. We use our unique survey data, collected just before the general election, to answer three questions. First, since Murkowski voted against her own party on several important occasions (Arkin 2021), did the top-4/RCV help Murkowski avoid getting "primaried?" Second, did Murkowski benefit from strategic behavior, or was she sincerely the first choice of many Democrats? Third, after participating in the new election system, how did Alaskan voters evaluate the new process?

In this article, we find:

First, the electoral system is part of the explanation for how Murkowski was able to defeat the Trump-endorsed Republican for U.S. Senate. Given voter preferences, we argue that Murkowski would have struggled to win reelection in a system with traditional partisan primaries. The electoral system is also part of the story for Democrat Mary Peltola's victory in the state's U.S. House election.

Second, the top-4/RCV rules provide incentives for strategic behavior, particularly in the general election. Voters may wish to rank their true second-choice preference ahead of their true first-choice preference if they fear (a) their real first-choice may not ultimately prevail against their least-preferred candidate and (b) their real second-choice candidate may be able to win but risks early elimination. Combining Democrats and Independents in our survey data, we find that 21% self-reported considering electability while ultimately deciding to place Murkowski first. Nevertheless, the potential for strategic behavior is only part of the story; a large bloc of voters favored both Murkowski and Peltola as their first choices, many of these apparently sincerely, and the new rules allowed such voters to express these preferences as well.

Third, voters' reactions to the new electoral system are partisan, with Democrats and Independents favoring the rules under which their preferred candidates were able to win elections, even though the final-round Senate choice came down to two Republicans, electing a Republican. While more negative in their assessments, Republican attitudes vary as well. Beyond partisanship, reactions to the new rules correspond with the extent and type of voters' populist beliefs. Voters with higher levels of anti-expert or national-identity populist attitudes are more likely to prefer closed partisan primaries over the top-4/RCV, but voters with higher anti-elite populist attitudes are no more likely to do so. These kinds of electoral innovations are more compatible with certain kinds of populist views than others.

What do our findings mean for our understanding of how electoral systems affect voters? One implication is that the top-4/RCV system has the potential to affect individual-level voter outcomes, and will likely affect election results, when there are two serious candidates of the same party competing on the second-round general election ballot. The possibility of same-party candidates contending for position on the general election top-4/RCV ballot is similar to the same-

party elections that sometimes occur with top-2 systems. In short, the top-4/RCV made a difference in terms of which candidate won in part because it changed who, how, and when voters could make their choice. Furthermore, preferences in favor of the top-4/RCV system are associated with a voter being in a party that is perceived as benefiting from the new system. Finally, attitudes toward election reform among voters are conditioned by voter partisanship and voter populism.

What are the Theoretical and Empirical Expectations for the Alaska Test Case for Reform?

Ballot Measure 2, which created the top-4/RCV system, passed in 2020 by a narrow margin (50.6-49.4%) even though Trump beat Biden in Alaska that year (52.8-42.8%).[1] The first election under the top-4/RCV, the 2022 midterm, included Murkowski's threatened Senate seat. In 2010 she had lost the Republican primary, winning the seat with a rare and difficult write-in campaign (Yardley 2010).[2] Nevertheless, she continued to affiliate with the GOP and won the regular 2016 partisan primary (Everett 2021). In the Trump era, though, she did not always follow the party line: she voted to remove President Trump in his second impeachment, declined to support Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation, and voted with Democrats to preserve the Affordable Care Act. In response, her party censured her and Trump targeted her for defeat (Arkin 2021; Ruskin 2021). Representative Liz Cheney, who also defied Trump, lost her Wyoming Republican partisan primary on the same day Murkowski—and her main Republican rival—advanced forward in the top-4 Alaska primary (Bohrer 2022). It is hard to "primary" someone if that requires driving their support down below fourth place.

Other states will learn from Alaska's experience. The U.S. Constitution permits state-level changes in electoral laws, and modern primaries have evolved over time as advocates, party

leaders, and officeholders seek to change outcomes or gain advantages (Ware 2002; Cain and Gerber 2002; Hirano and Snyder 2019; Rackaway and Romance 2022). The legal framework is partially state-regulated and partially party-influenced. In fact, Alaska's path to adopting the top-4/RCV procedure began with changes in other states. For many years, Alaska and Washington used the "blanket primary" which permitted voters to switch between party primaries as they moved down the ballot (Cain and Gerber 2002). California adopted the blanket primary in the 1990s, only to have the Supreme Court strike it down for all three states in *California Democratic Party v. Jones.* Although each state initially reverted to traditional partisan primaries, the decision suggested nonpartisan elections as an alternative. The "primary" is the first stage of a two-stage election; even if the ballot lists candidates' party affiliations, the winners are not officially endorsed by the party. By 2012, both California and Washington were using a top-2 election.

Alaska's top-4 primary, like the top-2, allows voters to choose any candidate regardless of the voters' or candidates' party affiliations. The crucial difference is Alaska's rule pairs the nonpartisan primary with a ranked-choice general election. Alaska's rule differs from elections where RCV is used to choose a party nominee – such as Maine's electoral system – because the general election in the Alaska top-4/RCV system can feature candidates from the same party. In the general election, if no candidate has over 50% of the initial vote, the candidate with the fewest first-place votes is eliminated, and their votes are transferred to their second choice. If that is insufficient, the process is repeated, the weakest candidate eliminated, and their votes shifted to their next choice (either their second or third choice, depending on whether they supported the last-place candidate in the first round). The resulting winner has at least 50% of the remaining (non-exhausted) ballots, and the last two candidates can be of the same party.

Research on candidate and voter behavior in non-presidential American primaries has examined left-right ideological positioning of legislators, candidates, and voters. Most scholarship on primaries classifies rules according to ease of voter access, ranging from closed (registered partisans only voting in separate party primaries) to semi-closed (permits independents to vote in a party primary) to open (anyone can vote in one party's primary on election day though there are separate party primaries). The most common theoretical expectation is that more open primaries will broaden the electorate, and (with some assumptions) open primaries may shift the median primary voter away from the ideological extreme (Gerber & Morton, 1998; Kanthak & Morton, 2001; Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003; McGhee et al., 2014).

Much of the scholarship has focused on the hypothesized relationship between primary type and moderation. There is some evidence that open and top-two primary rules are associated with more moderate members of Congress and more moderate voters participating (Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003; Grose 2020), though other studies have not found any association between open primaries and moderate legislators (McGhee et al. 2014). The relationship can be complicated: nominating perceived extremists can result in moderation, if extremists lose the election to candidates of the opposing party (Hall 2015), and other dynamics may discourage moderates from running at all (Hall 2019). Scholarship on political parties has emphasized the ability of parties to adapt (Cohen et al. 2008; McGhee et al. 2014; Masket and Shor 2015; Masket 2016; Hassell 2018). Team-oriented partisan behavior may also influence the way voters react to these types of rules, as voters may not have the underlying ideological views spatial models presume, or they may be motivated by negative affect toward the other party (Achen and Bartels 2017; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017; Mason 2018; Webster 2020).

California's and Washington's experience with the top-2 informs our expectations for Alaska's top-4/RCV system because the top-2 shares some key institutional attributes. Both change the range of choices available to voters and the structure of candidate competition, modifying both the primary and general election procedures relative to traditional partisan elections. The possibility of having two serious candidates of the same party appearing in the general election can produce different opportunities, risks, and consequences for the participants (Alvarez and Sinclair 2015; J. A. Sinclair 2015; B. Sinclair and Wray 2015; J. A. Sinclair et al. 2018; J. A. Sinclair and O'Grady 2018; Grose 2020; Crosson 2021). The magnitude of the top-2's impact has been the subject of considerable debate, with some of the desired effects hard to identify or smaller than advocates might have hoped, particularly with regard to strategic voter behavior (Nagler 2015; Kousser 2015; Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz 2016; Hill and Kousser 2016; McGhee and Shor 2017; Kousser, Phillips, and Shor 2018; Crosson 2021). The ranked-choice component of the Alaska general election does provide a different window into the attitudes voters have towards multiple candidates than is available under the top-2. Significantly, the Alaska procedure moves eliminating and reallocating the support from third and fourth-place candidates from the earlier primary to the November general election. The key point, though, is that these types of rules are not just 'more open' than the open primary.[3] With both the top-2 and top-4/RCV, if the final choice is between two or more candidates of the same party in an otherwise lopsided-one-party electorate, the more moderate candidate may be able to build a coalition of opposite-party voters, moderate voters of their own party, and independents.

The top-4/RCV system may mitigate some of the drawbacks of the top-2. One criticism of the top-2 is that "orphaned voters" – those without a candidate of their own party – sometimes skip same-party general elections (Fisk 2020; Patterson 2020), although advocates emphasize that this

roll-off is relatively minimal (Munger 2019). Similar roll-off could occur in a RCV general election due to incomplete rankings and ballot exhaustion, a concern that may not be offset by greater voter satisfaction or other benefits (Nielson 2017; Coll 2021). A second major criticism of the top-2 is that a crowded primary field could yield a same-party general election with candidates from the locally weaker party, though such elections are rare (J.A. Sinclair, 2022). Shifting to top-4/RCV may mitigate this risk while preserving some of the moderating logic of the top-2 (Gehl and Porter 2020). Additionally, restricting the general election to only four candidates also could limit one of the potential downsides of RCV elections: reducing the complexity of the voter's task might limit voter confusion (Donovan, Tolbert, and Gracey 2019).

Top-4 and Top-2 Primary Reforms: Voters' Populist Attitudes

A more general criticism of these types of reforms is that they harm political parties. American primaries—of all kinds, including closed primaries—tend to be more open to voter participation and less controlled than the party-related institutions in other democracies (Hazan and Rahaṭ 2010; Sandri, Seddone, and Venturino 2016; J. A. Sinclair 2019). Functioning parties are considered essential for democracy (Schattschneider 2004), and some have argued that reducing party control in the name of reform may be counterproductive (Masket 2016; Rackaway and Romance 2022). Primary reforms which reduce barriers to broad citizen participation are sometimes characterized as populist reforms, standing in opposition to political elite control of nominations (Cain 2015).

Yet, these types of reforms can also be understood as efforts to contain populist leaders and movements. While the term *populism* has several meanings, Mudde describes populism as "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and

antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people," even if in reality the group perceived as 'the pure people' does not form a majority (for example, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012, 8). Work in the U.S. (Hawkins and Littvay 2019) and elsewhere (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Norris 2020) has focused on the different kinds of populist attitudes and party positions. Oliver and Rahn (2016) divide the populist attitudes of American voters into three types: a belief about elite control, the mistrust of experts, and national identity; they find that supporters of Trump tended to have higher populism scores across all three types, whereas supporters of candidates like Bernie Sanders tend have only anti-elite attitudes.

While other work has focused more broadly on constructing other types of populism scales (Petersen, Osmundsen, and Arceneaux 2023; Uscinski et al. 2021), Oliver and Rahn's three dimensions capture the tension about whether these reforms are populist or not. Since these types of election rules can be seen as attempts to frustrate *party* elites, anti-elite populist voters may approve of the reforms while the other types of populist voters may (correctly) identify themselves as the intended targets, and dislike the reforms (B. Sinclair and Sinclair 2021). This latter possibility informs our argument and expectations. In Alaska, candidates who would likely perform worse under the new electoral system are the most populist in ways identified with Donald Trump and his Republican allies, and thus we think these specific populist attitudes will be associated with opposition to the Alaska electoral reform.

Testing the Impact of Top-4/RCV on Voter Behavior with Our 2022 Alaska Voter Survey

Our dependent variables are voter preferences over candidates and election systems, measured multiple ways within a survey conducted in advance of the 2022 Alaska general election.

We partnered with DHM Research to conduct a multi-mode survey focused on the U.S. Senate contest. Our timing reflects a deliberate choice to focus on the ranked-choice voting (RCV) general election, since the primary did not eliminate any notable candidates for any statewide contest. The combined sample includes 700 interviews completed between October 24th and November 7th (the day before the election), including landline (201), cellphone (39), and SMS (460) respondents. We pool the respondents from all three contact types together and use the overall sample weights DHM provided in all analyses. Details about the survey methodology, disposition reports, and resulting data are provided in the online appendix. Mass-level surveys of Alaska are rare in political science given the difficulty of conducting survey research with the state's small population and other unique attributes. This is one of the highest-quality attempts to measure the preferences of Alaska electorate ever produced for scholarly research.

We measure voter preferences regarding the Senate candidates in three ways. First, we asked the respondents to rank the candidates in the Senate race, mirroring the structure of the actual ranked-choice election ballot. Second, we ask a series of pairwise comparisons between Senate candidates, offering respondents an opportunity to signal divergence between their ranked-choice behavior and true candidate preference. Third, we also directly inquired about how voters intended to approach the Senate election. To supplement the Senate data, we asked about preferences in the U.S. House election (also a statewide contest for Alaska's lone representative using the same top-4/RCV electoral rule). As covariates, we also measured the survey respondents' partisanship, ideology, and political faction.

In addition to the dependent variable of voter preferences over candidates, another type of dependent variable captures voter preferences and attitudes about election systems. To measure these views, we asked about voter experiences with the system in Alaska and broad preferences

over types of primary rules. Our survey also asked about populist attitudes of voters, which serves as a key independent variable to test our expectations that individuals' populist attitudes are associated with voter preferences about the top-4/RCV system.

The combination of survey data and election returns allows us to investigate three hypotheses. Our first is derived from a simple question: would Murkowski have lost a closed partisan primary to her Trump-backed opponent, Kelly Tshibaka? Given theoretical expectations around closed primaries, we hypothesize that many Republican voters had a substantial preference for the more-extreme Tshibaka over moderate Murkowski, and that she would have faced a high probability of losing a primary under alternative institutions.

Our second hypothesis is that Murkowski benefits from strategic voting behavior among Democrats. We know she ultimately won—but how did she do it? Ranked-choice voting elections do not necessarily eliminate incentives for strategic behavior: Democrats may have worried that although Murkowski could beat Tshibaka head-to-head the Democratic candidate, Patricia Chesbro, could not. If Democrats ranked Chesbro ahead of Murkowski, they ran the risk of eliminating Murkowski, sending Chesbro to defeat in the final round against Tshibaka. An alternative explanation is that Democrats could have sincerely preferred Murkowski to Chesbro.

The third hypothesis is that populist voters will have different attitudes towards primary election reform, and rules like Alaska's, depending on what kind of populist they are. Beyond anticipating that Republicans like these rules less than Democrats, we also expect voters with greater expressions of national identity and anti-expert populism will prefer more closed systems, while anti-elite populists will favor more open and anti-party systems like Alaska's. Our populism survey questions are modified from Oliver and Rahn (2016); the questions about primary type preference are adapted from Sinclair and Sinclair (2021) to include a top-4/RCV option.

Election Results from Alaska's 2022 Election under Top-4/RCV

The election returns for the primary and general stages of the Alaska statewide contests—Governor, U.S. House, U.S. Senate—illustrate two key points, framing the results from our survey data. First, candidates matter, as the differing combinations of types of candidates produced different dynamics across the three statewide races. The gubernatorial election illustrated the smooth pathway for an incumbent Republican to win, in the mainstream of the party and absent a serious primary challenge, just as such candidates routinely win reelection in other states. The House race demonstrated the circumstances necessary for a Democrat to win against a divided Republican Party, while the Senate race showed how the new rule could help a more moderate Republican escape being "primaried." Second, there are also some commonalities between the elections, such as the very low vote totals for 4th-place candidates. Table 1 displays the results in these elections.

Governor Mike Dunleavy demonstrated that a Republican incumbent, lacking the personalities or controversial positions present in some of the other contests, could win handily. In the primary, Dunleavy finished in first place (with 40% of the vote). From a field of ten candidates, the rest of the top-four included: a second-place Democrat, Les Gara (23%); a third-place independent, former Governor Bill Walker (23%), and Charlie Pierce, a distant fourth-place Republican (at 7%). The fifth-place candidate, the closest alternative denied an opportunity to move forward, was another Republican (4%). Using a top-2 election, only Dunleavy and Gara would have advanced. Even with the top-4 rules, Dunleavy and Gara finished first and second again in the general election (as shown in Table 1). The rankings of the Gara, Walker, and Pierce voters are irrelevant because Dunleavy earned just over 50% of the general election vote to win

outright.[4] The leading Republican candidates for House and Senate, though, were not as well-positioned as Dunleavy.

Democrat Mary Peltola won a surprising victory in the House race, securing the seat Republican Don Young held for decades. Following his death, Alaska held a special election where the top-4 primary for the regular House election took place at the same time as the RCV general special election, with mostly the same candidates. Both elections had two Republican candidates obtaining meaningful shares of the vote alongside Peltola: Sarah Palin and Nick Begich. Peltola won the special election with 51% of the vote after the RCV tabulation, alarming Republicans nationally ahead of the regular election (Shabad 2022). For the full-term primary, Peltola came in first (37%) in the large field of candidates; Palin finished second (30%) and Begich third (26%). The fourth-place candidate earned four percent but withdrew from the race, advancing the fifth-place finisher, Libertarian Chris Bye. As shown in Table 1, Peltola came close to winning the general election on the first ballot (48%).[5] Few voters (about 2%) selected Bye, so his elimination did little to alter the race. Palin ran just ahead of Begich, so the RCV procedure next eliminated Begich. Had every Begich supporter selected Palin as the next choice, Palin could have narrowly beat Peltola. Yet, Begich voters were split in how they recorded their next preference after Begich. Some Begich voters left incomplete rankings or ranked Peltola second. With only some Begich voters next choosing Peltola, Peltola won comfortably 51-42%, with 6% incomplete or blank. Peltola is a candidate with a unique identity and political orientation, as she focused on local issues rather than national ones, and was the beneficiary of an intra-party Republican feud.

In the Senate contest, the anti-Murkowski Republicans rallied around Kelly Tshibaka. Murkowski finished first (45%) and Tshibaka second in the primary (39%), with Democrat Patricia Chesbro in third place (7%) and Republican Buzz Kelley in fourth (2%). Although the Senate

contest, like the U.S. House race, had many names on the ballot, both really had only three competitive candidates. While Chesbro faced long odds, she had the benefit of being the only Democrat to advance, and was a serious candidate (Lester 2022). In the first round of the general election, Murkowski and Tshibaka were nearly tied (43-42%), while Murkowski ran comfortably ahead of Chesbro. Removing 4th-place finisher Kelley, who earned approximately 3% of the vote, did not change the totals much, leaving Murkowski ahead of Tshibaka 44-43%. Eliminating 3rd-place Chesbro put Murkowski over the top with 51-44% in the final contest between the last two—both of whom were Republicans, with 5% of the ballots exhausted or empty and not attributed to either candidate. The results suggest that Murkowski obtained Democratic votes, which we confirm with the survey data.

Table 1. Official Election Returns, Alaska Statewide General Elections, 2022. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. The gubernatorial election ended with the initial vote (Dunleavy: just over 50%). "None" includes any 'none of the above' ballot—spoiled, blank, exhausted.

Governor	RCV Round 1	RCV Round 2	RCV Round 3
Dunleavy, Mike (R., Inc.)	50		
Gara, Les (D.)	24		
Pierce, Charlie (R.)	4		
Walker, Bill (Ind.)	21		
None	< 1		

House	RCV Round 1	RCV Round 2	RCV Round 3
Begich, Nick (R.)	23	24	
Bye, Chris (Lib.)	2		
Palin, Sarah (R.)	26	26	42
Peltola, Mary (D.)	48	49	51
None	1	1	6
Total	100	100	100

Senate	RCV Round 1	RCV Round 2	RCV Round 3
Chesbro, Patricia (D.)	11	11	
Kelley, Buzz (R.)	3		
Murkowski, Lisa (R.)	43	44	51
Tshibaka, Kelly (R.)	42	43	44
None	1	2	5
Total	100	100	100

Survey Results: Voter-level Data on Candidate Support in the Top-4/RCV system

The dependent variable and outcome of interest for both our first and second hypotheses is vote choice. Our survey results in Table 2 closely mirror the actual Senate election returns, differing from the final round by only one percentage point. As in the official election statistics, the decisive votes move from Chesbro to Murkowski, with the overwhelming majority of the survey respondents who ranked Chesbro first ranking Murkowski second. While we did not ask for the full rankings in the House election (on account of space constraints on the survey instrument), our question about candidate preference replicates the first-round results of that election.[6] We find Peltola-preferring voters support Murkowski (73%) over Chesbro (25%), explaining Murkowski's first-ballot strength. In the survey data, 92% of Murkowski's first-ballot support comes from Peltola supporters, while Tshibaka's first-ballot support comes almost evenly from Palin and Begich supporters. Yet, how did Murkowski avoid getting squeezed between a Democrat and Tshibaka?

Table 2. Alaska's 2022 Senate Election, Survey RCV Procedure. N=700, weighted column percentages. Following the same ranked choice voting rules as in the election and including side-by-side comparison with the true percentages by elimination round.

	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3	
	Poll %	True %	Poll %	True %	Poll %	True %
Murkowski	41	43	41	43	52	51
Tshibaka	40	42	41	43	43	44
Chesbro	15	11	15	11		
Kelley	1	3				
None	3	1	3	3	5	5

Table 3. Alaska's 2022 Senate Election, First Round Vote by Factional Type. Political faction determined by responses to political leader preferences; standard five-pt. ideology question; when crossed with party affiliation, the ideology categories are collapsed for convenience. The final question covers the second Trump impeachment for all voters. Displays weighted row percentages and, as a column, the percentage of voters in each category. N=700.

		Murkowski	Tshibaka	Chesbro	Kelley	None
	Col. %	Row %				
Political Faction by Leaders						
Progressives	19	49	0	43	2	5
Regular Dems.	15	59	1	38	1	1
Anti-Trump Rs.	24	87	3	5	0	4
DeSantis Rs.	20	4	93	0	1	2
Trump Rs.	22	5	91	0	2	1
Total	100	41	40	15	1	3
5-pt. Ideology						
Very Liberal	10	41	2	56	0	0
Liberal	14	61	5	33	0	0
Moderate	35	66	20	8	2	4
Conservative	27	18	68	7	2	5
Very Conservative	14	1	97	1	1	0
Total	100	41	40	15	1	3
Ideology and Party						
Liberal Democrat	22	55	1	43	0	0
Moderate Democrat	15	74	2	18	1	5
All True Independent	18	51	29	16	0	3
Moderate Republican	10	47	46	0	4	3
Conservative Republican	36	11	83	0	2	4
Total	100	41	40	15	1	3
Support Trump Impeachment						
Yes/Not Sure	58	67	5	22	1	4
No	42	4	88	5	2	1
Total	100	41	40	15	1	3

Table 3 displays candidate first-round preferences by the independent variables relevant for our first and second hypotheses, party and group affiliations. First, we have to determine if Murkowski would have been the likely winner under alternative rules and, second, if there is evidence of strategic behavior on the part of some segment of voters. One approach for addressing both issues focuses on the factional identity of voters beyond party identification. To measure this, we asked respondents "from this list, which politician comes closest to representing your views?"[7] Respondents could choose among twelve politicians, grouped after the fact as follows:

- Progressives: Bernie Sanders or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. These are well-known national progressives.
- Regular Democrats: Jim Clyburn, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden, or Joe Manchin. While these are politicians of varying ideological predispositions, they represent 'establishment' types.
- Anti-Trump Republicans. Mitt Romney, Liz Cheney, or Lisa Murkowski. These were selected because of their support for impeachment. Romney and Cheney together only command 6% of the total responses; 18% of Alaskans said Murkowski.
- DeSantis Republicans. Ron DeSantis, Tim Scott. These were potential alternative 2024 Republican presidential candidates. The category is named for DeSantis since 20% selected him and only 1% selected Scott. (We did not include Nikki Haley on the list at the time.)
- Trump Republicans. Donald Trump only. This category provides an important comparison between the Trump and DeSantis Republicans.

We expect support for Chesbro to be most common among Progressives—and it is, although more still selected Murkowski (49-43%). The Murkwoski-Chesbro split is slightly more pronounced among the regular Democrats. Unsurprisingly, since she is included, the anti-Trump group overwhelmingly favors Murkowski (87%; the group includes 24% of the respondents). The most interesting finding is the near-uniform support for Tshibaka among the DeSantis (93%) and Trump Republicans (91%).

By ideology, the "very liberal" prefer Chesbro, although this is a small group (only 10%). Tshibaka earned 97% of the support of the most conservative. We also paired ideology with party identification to better understand what the "moderates" may mean. The ideology and party group takes the "very liberal" and "liberal" Democrats and combines them, and then does the same with those respondents who are "moderate" or "conservative" Democrats. This process is mirrored for the Republicans, leaving true independents of every ideology grouped together (nearly all are moderates). This pulls the larger moderate category apart. What we can see from this section of Table 3 is that liberal Democrats support Chesbro more than moderate Democrats, who overwhelmingly prioritized Murkowski. Moderate Republicans are somewhat rare (only 10%) and divided. The conservative Republicans go overwhelmingly for Tshibaka (83%).

Table 3 illustrates Murkowski's partisan primary risk. Tshibaka earns the vote of 88% of those opposed to Trump's impeachment, but only 5% of those who supported it or were unsure. While there is a broader conversation in political science about the appeal of Trump to Republican voters, once we take those preferences and world-views as given, it is not hard to apply them in institutional contexts like this one. We do not conduct multivariate analysis for this because there is little variation once attitudes towards Trump are taken into account.

The Top-4/RCV Electoral System Helped Lisa Murkowski Win

The information in Table 3 helps to confirm our first hypothesis: Murkowski would likely have lost a partisan Republican primary. She was only the preferred first-round Senate candidate of 19% of her own party (independent-leaning Republicans included). Of those opposed to Trump's impeachment, she was the favorite of only 4%. While her weakness in a Republican primary seems clear, the *result* of having a partisan primary *system* is less obvious, particularly

given her support among Democrats. We'll return to this point in the conclusion, but part of an assessment of the consequences of the electoral system will depend on an assessment of *how* she came to have much Democratic support. Did a segment of the Democratic electorate abandon a weaker candidate of their own party in a tough-to-win place to help the most acceptable alternative of the dominant party?

With the election essentially a three-candidate race, Democrats had an incentive to behave strategically (at least, as a group)—to cast tactical votes for Murkowski as a way of expressing their opposition to Trump's preferred candidate, Tshibaka. Such tactical vote choices have "rationalistic" reasoning (Alvarez and Kiewiet 2009). Whether this is strategic behavior, for our second hypothesis, depends on what Democrats think of Chesbro. To attempt to elicit these preferences, we asked a series of head-to-head preference questions about the Senate race, phrased as "regardless of how, or whether, you plan to vote…", which candidate would the respondent "prefer to have win?" The results are in Table 4, split by party identification.[8]

The head-to-head data presents two challenges for the strategic voting story. Unsurprisingly, as we find when applying the RCV procedure to the rankings in the survey, Murkowski beats Tshibaka head-to-head overall, with Democrats overwhelmingly preferring Murkowski (93%) and Republicans preferring Tshibaka (76%). Unexpected, though, is that Murkowski beats Chesbro head-to-head *among Democrats*, even when abstracted away from the actual vote choice and ranking system. Murkowski wins convincingly among Democrats, 60-39%. Chesbro beats Tshibaka 45-41%, though this closer-than-expected finding should be treated with caution, as 14% gave no answer for this matchup. Murkowski is a Condorcet winner, beating the other two serious contenders head-to-head.[9] She also beats them in a plurality election, and with the ranked-choice voting procedure used in Alaska. The earlier evidence shows that the top-4/RCV

system allowed a popular candidate to avoid a primary loss. Yet the evidence for our second hypothesis about the strategic voting is weaker. The results suggest that Murkowski had a considerable amount of support, even among Democrats.

Table 4. Alaska's 2022 Senate Election, Survey Pairwise Comparisons. N=700. Weighted survey data showing percentages within party groupings preferring each candidate using separate pairwise comparison questions. The survey did not include pairwise questions for Kelley.

	Dem. %	Ind. %	Rep. %	Total %
Murkowski v. Tshibaka				
Murkowski	93	55	19	53
Tshibaka	2	39	76	42
No Answer	4	6	5	5
Murkowski v. Chesbro				
Murkowski	60	58	42	51
Chesbro	39	22	12	24
No Answer	2	21	46	25
Chesbro v. Tshibaka				
Tshibaka	2	28	79	41
Chesbro	90	51	5	45
No Answer	8	21	15	14

However, there is some evidence for strategic behavior, or at least strategic thinking. We asked voters how they made their decision. Did they just vote for their favorite candidate, rank candidates and considered electability, or rank candidates simply in order of personal preference? Democrats and Independents faced the most substantial dilemma in this regard. Among that group of party identifiers (N=356), 21% both voted for Murkowski first and self-reported considering electability (amounting to 1-in-3 Democratic/Independent votes for Murkowksi). Of the voters ranking Chesbro first, the proportion self-identifying as choosing based on electability was much smaller (about 1-in-7).

Some Democrats signal strategic behavior with the head-to-head questions: 8% of Democrats both ranked Murkowski first and favored Chesbro head-to-head. For many, though, the survey does not provide conclusive evidence of casting tactical votes through the explicit acknowledgment of considering electability in the rankings or head-to-head preferences. It still

may be strategic behavior, as 38% of respondents prefer Peltola on our House question and yet ranked Murkowski first for Senate. That amount of Democratic crossover voting for Republican Murkowski implies that there could have been some sophisticated behavior in this contest. In the context of the heated Trump-Murkowski feud, voters are limited in strategic messages that can be sent via elections (Alvarez and Kiewiet 2009). Apparent tactical behavior is a way of clearly expressing disdain for the strongest opponent: it indicates that defeating the least-favored candidate is the most important consideration. It is possible that Democrats are trying to speak clearly in the same way in this 2022 Alaska election by repeatedly expressing a preference for Murkowski to express disdain for Trump.

Voter Partisanship Is Associated with Support for Top-4/RCV

Turning to our third hypothesis, we examine the relationship between partisanship, populist attitudes, and views about electoral systems. Here the dependent variables are respondent preferences related to the Alaska top-4/RCV electoral rules. Our independent variables include populist attitudes, which cross party lines, and voter partisanship. The measures of the three types of populist attitudes help explain the remaining variation unexplained by partisanship in our analysis focused on support for particular primary rules.

Tables 5 and 6 contain the summary results from questions evaluating voter experience; Table 5 covers questions specifically about Alaska and Table 6 covers questions broadly about electoral institutions. The questions in Table 6 utilize wording from primary preference questions from Sinclair and Sinclair (2021)'s research on the top-2 primary, though the Table 6 questions are written and adapted for the top-4/RCV electoral system.

Overall, respondents thought the 2022 top-4/RCV system in Alaska was administered well, but there are partisan differences. Given the national context, contrasting partisan messages about election procedures following the 2020 election, and complexity of RCV procedures, it is a positive sign that only 25% of Republicans thought the ballots were very or somewhat unlikely to be counted accurately (19% for all voters). Similarly, only 19% of Republicans thought it was somewhat or very difficult to know what to do to participate in Alaska's elections (16% for all voters). Most respondents (59%) thought it was "very easy" to know what to do.

The substantial partisan differences concern who benefits. On balance, and including the independents, the reviews are mildly favorable. The partisan differences can be explained by the election outcomes: Democrats did better than usual in Alaska in 2022. Therefore, it is not very surprising that Democrats favored the rules under which these outcomes occurred, and many Trump-leaning Republicans did not. Among Republicans, 61% thought the law benefited Democrats; only 13% of Democrats thought the same. Democrats (and Independents) tended to think the rules benefited neither party. Among Republicans, only 9% thought other states should use this rule; in contrast, 70% of Democrats did. This result suggests that the first post-reform election result hardens attitudes about the electoral system along party lines.

Table 5. Attitudes Towards Alaska's Election System by Party. N=700. Weighted column percentages by party. Some rows include consolidated answer categories.

	Dem. %	Ind. %	Rep. %	Total %
In the November 2022 general election, how likely is it in your state that the votes will be counted accurately? (N=670; "refuse" = dropped.)				
Very Likely	86	63	42	62
Somewhat Likely	4	14	33	19
Very/Somewhat Unlikely	11	23	25	19
Thinking about the primary and general election procedures in your state, how easy or difficult is it to know what to do to participate in the elections? (N=683; "refuse = dropped).				
Very Easy	67	68	49	59
Somewhat Easy	21	15	33	25
Very/Somewhat Difficult	12	17	19	16
Do you think the Democratic Party or the Republican Party benefits more from the new election rules in Alaska? (N=700)				
Republicans	4	3	5	4
Neither / Don't Know or Refuse	83	71	34	58
Democrats	13	26	61	37
Do you think more states should have election laws like Alaska's nonpartisan top-4 primary with ranked-choice general elections? (N=700)				
Yes	70	42	9	38
Neither / Don't Know or Refuse	25	28	24	25
No	5	30	66	37

Table 6. Primary Election Preference by Party. N=700. Weighted column percentages by party identification for preferences over electoral institutions.

	Dem. %	Ind. %	Rep. %	Total %
Partisan vs. Nonpartisan				
Party Primaries	10	20	55	32
Nonpartisan Elections	84	77	35	61
No Response	5	3	9	7
Open vs. Closed				
Closed Primaries	9	12	43	25
Open Primaries	85	77	44	65
No Response	6	12	13	10
Nonpartisan Type				
Top-2	15	34	62	40
Top-4/RCV	72	52	20	45
No Response	13	15	17	15

Additional survey questions permit comparing the Alaska laws to alternative systems (full question text is in the appendix). Every respondent got each of the questions in Table 6. Alaska Democrats favor nonpartisan-type elections (like the top-4/RCV and top-2) over having party primaries. They also prefer open partisan primaries over closed partisan primaries and favor the top-4/RCV system over the top-2 primary system. The magnitude of the preference for top-4/RCV over top-2 (72-15%) is surprisingly large, though the introduction of top-4/RCV in the state before is concurrent with the survey timing, and is consistent with past research (B. Sinclair and Sinclair 2021). The preferences of true Independents also mirror the Democrats. The key finding is that Republican opposition to nonpartisan elections is not as strong as Democratic support for them: Republicans only favored partisan primaries 55-35%. Republicans evenly divide between preferring open and closed partisan primaries. With closed partisan primaries preferred by minorities of Democrats and Independents, and only by about half of the Republicans, only a minority of the respondents wish to have these kinds of partisan electoral institutions.[10] These questions did not force respondents into a branching structure, but there is a branching logic to

them. We created a variable for rule preferences that respects the split between partisan and nonpartisan primaries on the first question, and then places respondents into the appropriate category in the follow-up question. With this type of branching structure, 38% of respondents would prefer the top-4/RCV option, 17% the top-2, 12% prefer open, and 18% prefer closed; 15% of the respondents did not give complete answers.[11]

Figure 1. Coefficients from Multinomial Logistic Regression for Primary Type. N=614 respondents with a complete rule preference order. Coefficients relative to top-4/RCV as preference, meaning higher values correspond with increased likelihood of preferring each alternative system over the top-4/RCV.

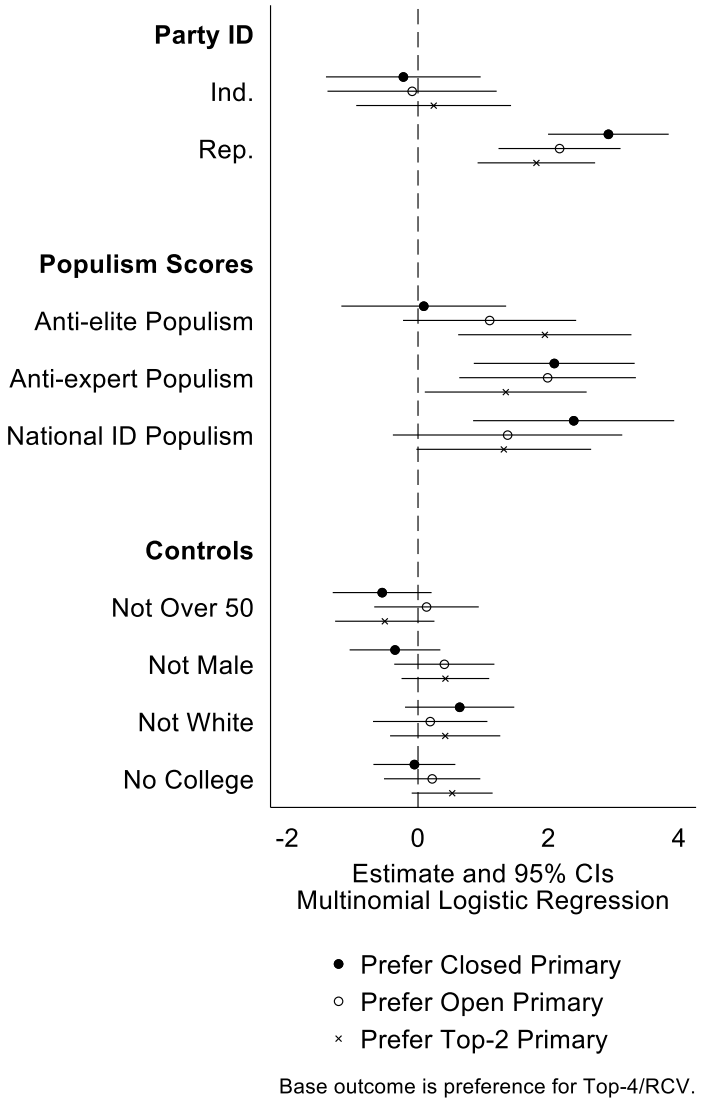
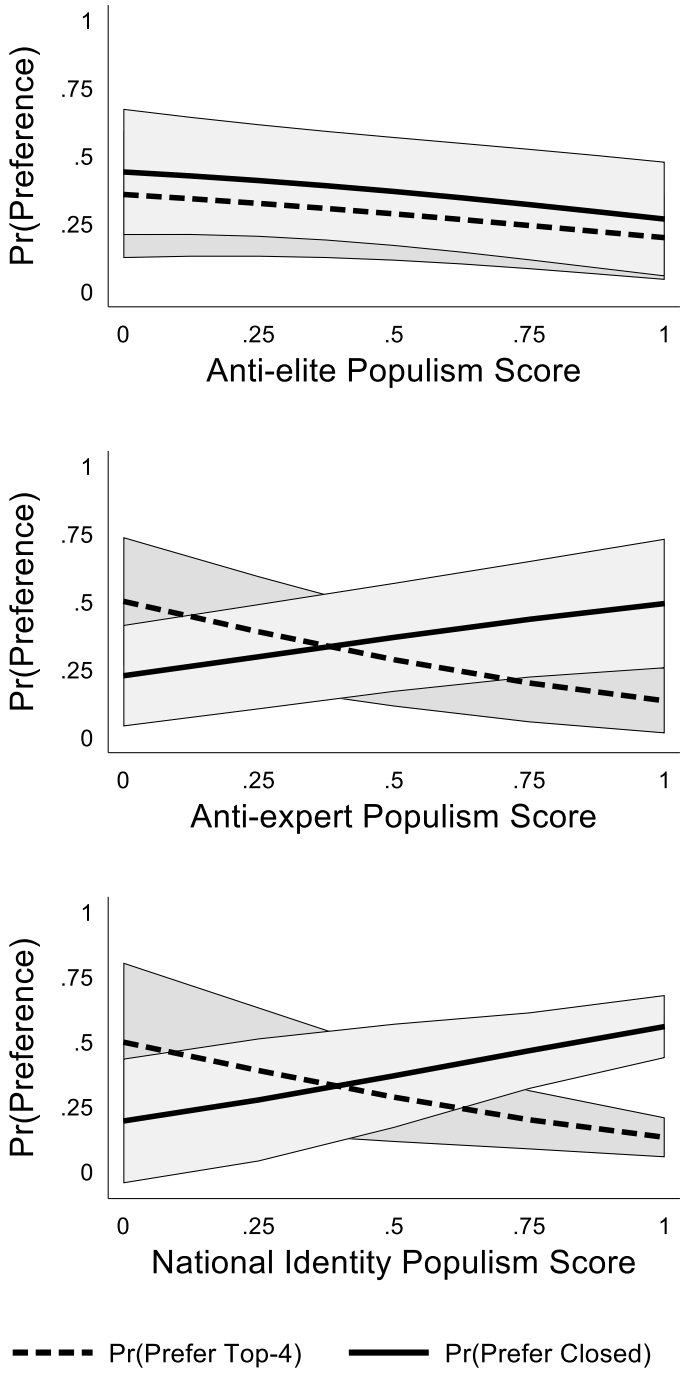


Figure 2. Predicted Probability of Support and 95% Confidence Intervals for Nonpartisan Top-4 and Closed Primaries by Voters' Populism Attitudes. Higher values on the y-axis show greater probability of supporting each primary type; and higher values of the x-axis indicate increasing levels of each populist attitude. These figures also assume a Republican voter, over 50, male, white, and college educated. Displaying predicted values only for top-4/RCV and Closed primary preferences.



Populist Attitudes Are Associated with Lower Support for Top-4/RCV

To examine the relationship of populist attitudes and respondents' attitudes about preferred primary type, controlling for partisanship, we use a multinomial logistic regression, implemented using the svy package in Stata 18. There are four values of the outcome variable (top-4/RCV, Nonpartisan, Open, Closed) and 614 respondents without missing responses for these survey questions. The three populism categories are anti-elite, anti-expert, and national identity sentiments derived from Oliver and Rahn (2016) and measured on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, normalized so that strongly disagree (the least populist answer) equals zero and strongly agree (the most populist answer) equals one. Anti-elite sentiment is measured with two questions and averaged; we used one question each to measure anti-expert and nationalistic populism sentiments. Full question wordings (and a more extensive discussion of these measures) are presented in the appendix.[12] As control variables we include measures of age (above/below 50), gender (male/not), race (white/not), and education (4-year college/not).[13] Figure 1 presents estimated coefficients and Figure 2 shows predicted probabilities for a range of populism values for a Republican voter (the most common partisan category in Alaska).

While we find no significant difference between Democrats and Independents, Republicans are more likely to prefer *any* alternative to the top-4/RCV system. Consistent with Oliver and Rahn (2016), anti-elite populism can be found in both parties. We find no relationship between anti-elite populism and a preference for closed over top-4/RCV primaries. Oliver and Rahn, though, found that Trump's supporters tended to have high scores in anti-elite, anti-expert, *and* national identity populism. We find that respondents with high levels of anti-expert and national ID populism are more likely to prefer closed to top-4/RCV elections. Higher anti-expert populism scores are generally associated with a rejection of the top-4/RCV system.

Figure 2 assumes a profile of a Republican respondent, and holding all other levels of populism at their theoretical midpoint (0.50), there is little difference in the probability of selecting top-4/RCV for someone with a higher or lower anti-elite populism score. Those Republicans are about equally likely to pick a closed primary system and top-4/RCV. As anti-expert scores increase, though, such a voter becomes considerably more likely to favor closed primaries, at an approximately 50% chance for those strongly agreeing with the mistrusting experts statement. Nearly the same is true for the national identity populism score. Of course, those with both high national identity and anti-expert populism scores, the kinds of Republicans most likely to favor Trump, are quite likely to favor closed primaries.

The main findings from this analysis are that Democrats and Independents liked the new top-4/RCV rules while Republicans did not. Voters with strong anti-expert and nationalistic populist attitudes were opposed to the Alaska electoral reforms, while there was no observable effect for anti-elite attitudes. Even when controlling for partisanship, there is an association between some types of populist attitudes and preferences over reform. The Alaska reform gets some support from Democrats, from low-populism Republicans, and from voters with lower levels of hostility to experts.

Conclusion: Partisanship and Populism Explain Attitudes Toward the Top-4/RCV

Each election cycle provides new opportunities to learn about the broad trend and variation in outcomes from this new class of nonpartisan election rules, adding Alaska's new variant to the top-2 in California and Washington. In our study, we set out to address three critical questions about how the system worked in Alaska in its first year, and to offer an initial look at how this electoral system may unfold in the long run. Overall, we find that the system likely helped

Murkowski retain her seat, that the evidence is mixed about how likely such events are to occur with other candidates and circumstances, and that the system has a substantial but not overwhelming amount of support. From these findings, we can tease out some of the implications for potentially adopting this rule for other electoral contexts in the United States.

First, our survey data strongly suggests Murkowski would have been in trouble in a partisan Republican primary. Of course, there are limitations to exploring the counterfactual; if Alaskans had narrowly rejected, instead of narrowly accepting, Measure 2 in 2020, perhaps a great number of other different choices might have followed—Murkowski switching parties, or running as an independent, or casting a different vote for presidential removal, improbably winning as a write-in again, and so on. What is clear from our data, though, is that the majority of Republicans preferred Trump-endorsed Tshibaka at the time of the 2022 election. To the extent that the top-4/RCV helped Murkowski build the coalition she needed to win reelection, this race demonstrates the potential for a more moderate candidate to avoid being "primaried" and to win the general election. For the reform's advocates, that finding is largely consistent with their claims.

Second, we also find that such a result may not always occur with moderate candidates. Murkowski was an experienced, long-time incumbent, with high name-recognition; she also had some support from Republicans to go along with substantial support from Democrats and Independents. The Democratic first-round vote for Murkowski we observe in this case may not materialize for other centrist Republicans in Alaska or elsewhere, should other states adopt this rule. It will take several election cycles to get a better sense of the strategic voting incentives and behavior in Alaska, to see whether Democrats regularly abandon weaker Democrats for moderate Republicans, as they did with Chesbro for Murkowski, while backing stronger Democrats like

Peltola. Too many Democrats and Independents on our survey ranked Murkowski ahead of Chesbro to be confident about the incentives for strategic behavior in these elections in the future.

Third, there is broad, but not universal, support for the new rules. While many Alaskans liked the new rules, some Republicans did not. While it is sensible that voters on the 'winning side'—the anti-Trump Republicans and Democrats, strong enough to pass the rules and elect Peltola and Murkowski with them—like the rules, the populism findings add some nuance to a simple dichotomy. After taking partisanship into account, some populism attitudes, those most uniquely associated with former President Trump, correspond with hostility towards the system, and a preference for closed primaries instead. Defenders of this system in Alaska and advocates for it elsewhere may attempt to politically maneuver by using anti-elite populism arguments, which—controlling for partisanship—did not have the same kind of negative relationship with top-4/RCV rule preferences. Since Democratic voter enthusiasm for the top-4/RCV could also be attributed to the U.S. House result, with a Democratic candidate winning, future work will have to continue to evaluate the durability of these attitudes in the face of changing electoral fortunes and expectations over time.

Finally, the advent of the top-4/top-5 alternative is also an opportunity to expand the research agenda on electoral systems in the United States. While top-4 is part of a class of primaries allowing all voters to choose among all candidates, it is a different system than the top-2. Yet, so far, the Alaska results do not suggest large differences in outcomes between the top-2 and the top-4/RCV systems. The Senate primary in Alaska, if conducted with a top-2 rule, would have likely produced a Tshibaka-Murkowski general election, for which the outcome would presumably have been similar. Going forward, this will need to be a major part of the research agenda for these types of electoral institutions: not only distinguishing them from traditional partisan primaries, but

also trying to understand how they differ from each other. The Murkowski victory has given advocates another selling point, and the observed popularity of these primary types may make them difficult targets for repeal. Yet political scientists' knowledge about these systems, especially top-4/RCV, is nascent. The consequences of these systems have enduring relevance for understanding how electoral systems shape U.S. history.

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Online Appendix

1 Survey Methodology Overview

The survey data allows us to examine vote choice by partisan identity, to ask about specific choice sets that were *not* on the ballot, and to ask about experiences and preferences over rules that are unobservable by other means. For the types of questions like those considered in our paper, polling remains one of the best tools available for understanding voter behavior. Yet, conducting polling and survey research in Alaska presents unique logistical issues. Outside of three primary urban areas of the state (Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau) much of the remaining population is scattered widely throughout the—geographically—largest state in America. Unfortunately, it is also one of the smallest by population: in November 2022, the state had only about 602,000 registered voters, the majority of whom registered with neither the Democratic (about 77,000) nor Republican (about 145,000) Party. Unaffiliated was the most popular option.[14] Due to the large geography, remoteness in inaccessibility of some residents, and relatively small population, interviewing registered voters in Alaska is exceptionally difficult and expensive.

We worked directly with DHM Research, a private polling firm that has extensive experience conducting academic, political, and other types of polling in the Pacific Northwest. We worked closely with DHM on study and questionnaire design; they conducted the sampling, interviewing, and initial data preprocessing. The most cost-efficient approach for interviewing registered voters in this kind of environment, while still obtaining quality data, is to contact them by phone or SMS as part of a mixed-mode survey. DHM developed three samples to reach a total of 700 interviewed, carried out between October 24th and November 7th (the day before the election): a landline sample (201 respondents), a cellphone sample (30 respondents), and a SMS

sample (460 respondents). Disposition data on live calls and SMS contacts are provided below (Tables A1 and A2). On average, the interviews took 17 minutes to complete. DHM provided the weights for the overall sample; in the analysis that follows, we pool the respondents from all three contact types together. The SMS respondents were sent a text to their devices inviting them to complete the survey online; the landline and cellphone contacts completed the interview on the phone.

The sample weight provided by DHM was calculated to match the expected turnout by gender, age, race, area of the state, and educational attainment; it is set to have an average of 1. We provide a histogram (see Figure A1) that shows the distribution of the sample weight variable. The minimum value of the sample weight is 0.15, while the maximum value is 12.67. While the median value of the sample weight is 0.71, there are some larger weights; in particular, we have fourteen respondents who have weights of 5.0 or greater; six have weights of 6.0 or greater. The two respondents at the upper end of the weight distribution have weights of 9.56 and 12.67, respectively. As Alaska is a difficult place to poll, we are not surprised by the handful of respondents who have relatively large weighting values. The larger weights are not driving the results, though: the main results discussed in the paper are broadly consistent with the unweighted data as well. The margin of error reported for the survey by DHM is +/- 3.7%, although this does not take into account the design effects.

In Table A3 we show the distributions of various demographic factor (gender, age, race, area and educational attainment) for the unweighted and weighted samples. Not surprisingly, given the complexities of polling in Alaska and our multi-mode design, we do see that the demographic profile of the survey respondents shifts somewhat with use of the sample weights. While regarding gender the weighted and unweighted samples do not differ appreciably, use of

the sample weights helps to adjust for imbalances with respect to age and educational attainment (in particular).

Table A1: Telephone Interview Details. This table provides the details of the attempts to obtain phone-mode survey respondents in 2022, resulting in 240 complete interviews.

Live interview totals	33,588
Complete	240
Answering machine	4,812
Interrupted – Disability compliance	27
Call back any time	583
Busy signal	121
Dead air	1,025
Disconnected number	814
Fax or modem line	70
Set appointment – hard	4
Initial Refusal	3,636
Language barrier	51
No answer	1,075
Office/ Business	571
No answer	2,533
Busy	1,088
Disconnected	11,065
Dropped	148
Answering Machine	4,069
Fax/Modem	326
No signal	36
Do not all / Add to DNC list	358
Callback Qualified	4
Terminated qualified	47
Terminated quota ful	124
Refusal by reception / Household refusal	695
Set appointment – soft -	41
Terminate Vote Registration	13
Terminated Under 18	12

Table A2: Text-to-Online Interview Details. This table provides the details of the attempts to obtain text-mode survey respondents in 2022, resulting in 460 complete interviews.

Text totals	51,953
Completed	460
No response	49,627
Dropouts	1,826
Screened out	62
Interrupted	40

Figure A1: Distribution of the Survey Sample Weight.

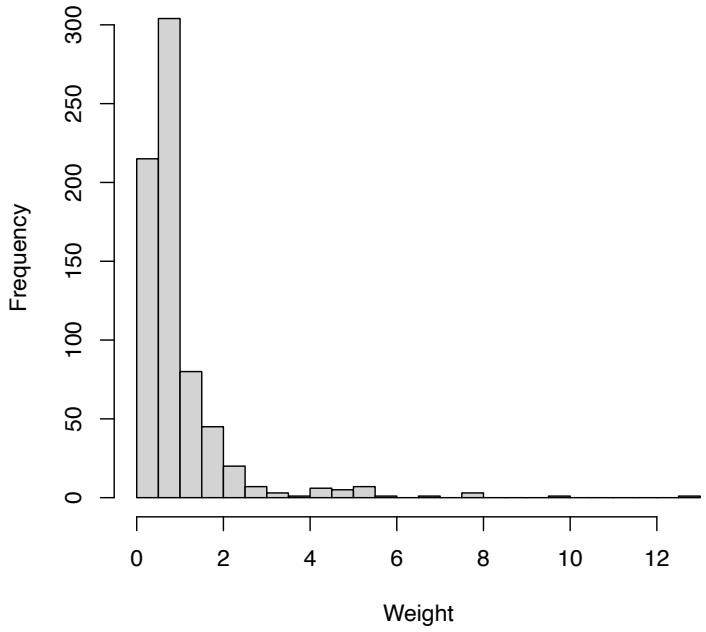

Table A3. Weighting Information.

Variable	Unweighted percentage	Weighted percentage
Gender		
Male	48%	49%
Female	51%	49%
Transgender	<1%	<1%
Non-binary	<1%	1%
Other	1%	1%
Age		
18-49	19%	45%
50-64	37%	25%
65+	39%	21%
Refused	4%	4%
Race		
White alone	81%	65%
Alaska Native	6%	15%
Other, two or more	9%	16%

For all the difficulties of polling in Alaska—limiting the size of the sample we can collect, and requiring some larger weights than might be typical in other contexts—the data we obtained seems to match the available evidence of observable reality. We also find that the weights are not of great consequence for the substantive interpretation of the data. For example, the *unweighted* first-round vote for Murkowski is 46%, for Tshibaka 39%, for Chesbro 11%, and for Kelley 1% (none gets 2%). The *weighted* first-round vote for Murkowski is 41%, for Tshibaka 40%, for Chesbro 15%, and for Kelley 1% (none gets 3%). In the final round of the Senate election, the unweighted preference for Murkowski is 56%; the weighted preference is 52%. They are not, of course, identical. These differences are not particularly important for the interpretation of the results as we present them.

A Note on Gender in the Survey

The survey data included two measures of gender. We asked, and have used for the analysis presented in our paper, our own non-binary self-identifying gender question (AK_503). The survey data was also returned with an administrative gender binary variable (SGEN), included in the same section of the survey data as the variables describing mode (SMODE) and so on While we rely on the self-identifying gender question from the survey, the results do not differ if using the administrative gender binary variable. Neither version of the gender variable produces significant results.

2 Methodological Details

This section provides additional details about the analysis presented in the main text of the paper, focusing on the key questions about vote choice and candidate preference. The survey included four types of questions relevant for assessing vote choice:

1. The U.S. House preference question.
2. The U.S. Senate ranking questions.
3. The head-to-head U.S. Senate choice questions.
4. A direct voting strategy question.

Alaska House Election

We asked only a single, simplified question about the U.S. House race. This decision as motivated by practical considerations of survey length. Since we already saw the full ranked-choice procedure in operation in the House special election, and because of the usual Alaska-specific storylines around that race, it seemed more important to focus survey time on the Senate race. We asked this question after the U.S. Senate questions, but it makes some sense to discuss it first. Note that we provided information in the survey that mirrored the information available on the ballot: respondents had party cues, even if the elections had lost their partisan structure.

> Turning now to the Alaska U.S. House election, which candidate do you hope will win the election to be Alaska's United States Representative? [Randomize choices; do not offer a "don't know" answer, but permit it.]
>
> 1. Nick Begich, Registered Republican
> 2. Mary Peltola, Registered Democrat
> 3. Chris Bye, Registered Libertarian
> 4. Sara Palin, Registered Republican

Only 7 of 700 respondents skilled answering this question, and only 14 of 700 preferred Chris Bye (the libertarian). For our analytical purposes, this variable was simplified in the analysis and recoded into four categories: Peltola, Begich, Palin, and a combined Bye/None. Unweighted, Peltola won the support of 54%. Weighted, this drops to 51%. Her final RCV total (as reported in the main text of the paper) was about 51%, too, including exhausted ballots as a category.

Ranking Questions

The ranking questions attempted to recover the Senate preferences for the ranked-choice voting election. Of course, with a phone poll, it is difficult to replicate precisely the visual experience of the ranked-choice ballot. We drafted the survey expecting to get more phone respondents than text-to-online respondents, as well, so the questions were drafted (an then equivalently implemented) with phone comprehension in mind. We asked a series of four questions, removing previously selected choices from the alternatives as we went along, and only asking the next question if the voter continued to rank alternatives.[15] In case the new election rules prompted an unusually large number of voters to skip voting at all, we also asked two versions of the questions: one for those intending to vote and one for those expressing less interest in voting. Since nearly every respondent to the survey also was a likely voter (674 of 700), this branching ended up being largely irrelevant; we just merged the 26 less-likely respondents back in as if they had been asked the regular version.[16]

Before answering the three ranking questions, respondents got some prefatory text announcing the purpose of the questions: "We would like to ask about how you plan to vote in

the upcoming Alaska U.S. Senate election, using the new ranked-choice procedure." We then asked:

> Which of the following candidates will you rank **first** [second, third, fourth] in the Alaska Senate election? [Randomize between voters, retain order within voters; only retain choices previously not selected at higher ranking level; stop asking when voters top ranking.]
>
> 1. Patricia Chesbro Registered Democrat
> 2. Lisa Murkowski, Registered Republican
> 3. Kelly Tshibaka, Registered Republican
> 4. Buzz Kelley, Registered Republican
> 5. No Candidate

Nearly all of the relevant action takes place in the decisions to rank 1st and 2nd choice candidates. Table A4 presents the full set of pairs of candidate rankings for 1st and 2nd place. So, for example: 41% ranked Murkowski first. Of the (weighted) sample, 21% ranked Murkowski first *and* Chesbrok 2nd. Of the (weighted) sample, 16% ranked Murkowski first *and* nobody second. That's nearly all of the Murkowski vote. For Tshibaka's voters, the most common pair was Tshibaka first and none second (20%). The A4 underscores their rejection of Murkowski, because the next most popular pair for Tshibaka voters was Tshibaka first and Kelley second (17% of the total respondents), even though Kelley was not even really running at this point. Tshibaka-Murkowski pairs in *either* direction (1st and 2nd, any order) amounts to under 5% of the total survey respondents.

Table A4. Pairs of Candidate Rankings. 1st and 2nd choices for all voters, with each entry representing the percentage of the total data making that pair of rankings (cell percentages).

	Ranked 2nd

		Murkowski	Tshibaka	Chesbro	Kelley	None	Total
Ranked 1st	Murkowski	N/A	1	21	2	16	41
	Tshibaka	3	N/A	0	17	20	40
	Chesbro	11	2	N/A	0	2	15
	Kelley	0	1	0	N/A	0	1
	None	0	0	0	0	3	3
	Total	14	4	22	19	42	100

Head-to-Head Questions

We intended the head-to-head questions to get a different perspective on the Senate race, to ask about preferences outside of the context of a ranked-choice ballot. Since including Kelley would have dramatically increased the number of questions we needed, without (we thought) adding a great deal of information, the head-to-head questions focused only on Murkowski, Tshibaka, and Chesbro. They followed the RCV ranking and are in the form of:

> Regardless of how, or whether, you plan to vote in the upcoming Alaska Senate election, which of these two candidates would you prefer to have win the Senate election?
>
> 1. Candidate A, Registered [Party Name]
> 2. Candidate B, Registered [Party Name]

In future polling in these kinds of elections, political scientists should continue to experiment with variations in question wording, question ordering, and the other aspects of question presentation. It is certainly possible that implementation choices specific to our survey, or unique aspects of this election, encouraged Democrats (in particular) to rank Murkowski ahead of Chesbro too frequently, more than was truly a sincere preference. We used the "which candidate do you hope will win" language to try to get at the strategic abandonment of weak choices, but voters may not have thought in those terms or understood the distinction. Anticipating that we

might need another window into this kind of thinking, we also asked another question putting the issue more directly.

Strategic Behavior

We tried to ask directly about ranking candidates based on electability, anticipating the possibility that some Democratic voters might deliberately rank Murkowski ahead of Chesbro for reason. As it turns out, 70% of the respondents who reported listing their favorite candidate first and not ranking others did, in fact, not rank any others on our ranking questions either. And, of those who said they considered electability when ranking multiple candidates, the most common 2nd ranking was… Chesbro.

> Which of the statements below describes your strategy when voting in the Alaska senatorial general election:
>
> 1. I listed my favorite candidate first and did not list any others.
> 2. I ranked multiple candidates in the order I genuinely preferred them without considering electability.
> 3. I considered candidate electability when I ranked multiple candidates.

Still, about twice as many reported ranking sincerely (44%) than considering electability when ranking multiple candidates (20%). It will be interesting to see if that persists, since many voters may not realize that an RCV procedure does not obliviate the incentives for strategic behavior.

3 Populism

In recent years, scholars of American politics have grown increasingly interested in populism. This work takes place in multiple subfields and draws on diverse traditions, not all of which think about populism in the same way. As Hawkins and Littvay observe, populism was largely "ignored" by American political science outside of some interest in populist parties and the progressive era (Kirk Andrew Hawkins and Littvay 2019, 2). Leading recent scholarship on American politics has suggested that populist attitudes from an important second dimension of politics, alongside ideology, connected to belief in misinformation and conspiracies, or even behaviors stemming from a "need for chaos" (Petersen, Osmundsen, and Arceneaux 2023; Uscinski et al. 2021). Reform advocates favoring laws like the top-4/RCV procedure in Alaska, may be framed as anti-populists, aiming to frustrate candidates seen as extreme in their ideology, behavior, or beliefs.

Yet, there is a longstanding tradition of American scholarship that has developed a different understanding of populism, one that is directly relevant for reforms like the top-4/RCV rule. Cain describes populism in *Democracy More or Less* as "a general approach to increase direct popular sovereignty through citizen opportunities to monitor, control, and participate in government. It is characterized by a strong mistrust of delegated power and optimistic faith in citizenship capacity" (2015, 21). This "more elections" kind of populism is directly related to this type of reform and, in general, "the growing reliance on primary elections in American government since the early twentieth century," rejecting systems built around "party bosses, local notables, and elected officials controlling nominations through nontransparent, closed party caucuses and conventions" (Cain 2015, 71). This version of populism is more closely aligned with idea that a corrupt elite are preventing democratic responsiveness; it is the populism of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

(Rogin and Moran 2003). From this perspective, the advocates for the reforms are the populists, not the anti-populists, and the reform is populist in nature.

How to square these two competing themes? Can the reform be both populist and anti-populist at the same time? Here, Oliver and Rahn (2016) point the way towards a solution. In their paper, they measure three separate dimensions of populism: anti-elite populism, anti-expert populism, and national identity populism. As described in the main text of the paper, Oliver and Rahn find that supporters of Donald Trump scored highly on all three measures of populism in 2016 while, in contrast, supporters of Bernie Sanders only scored highly on anti-elite populism. This kind of anti-elite populism can be framed in a variety of ways, including suspicion of party elites; it reflects the concerns about the power of ordinary citizens against the rich and influential. While some voters with these kinds of views may support reforms like the top-4/RCV as an extension of these types of populist attitudes, there are certainly ways in which such voters might also associate "good government" reforms with elite causes and reject them. This is why we had no particularly strong expectation for this dimension in our analysis (see Figure 2 in the main text for the results). Yet, populism of the anti-expert and the national identity types capture more of the sense of misinformation and conspiracy present in other work on populism (for example, Uscinski et al. 2021). These reforms deliberately target individuals on those dimensions of politics, and it should be little wonder if such voters are more inclined to oppose them.

Questions

Our survey questions build on earlier research in American populism (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 197). Oliver and Rahn fielded a survey of 1,063 Americans during the heart of the presidential primary process in 2016. Their survey included 14 separate populism questions, some

of which they wrote and others that were borrowed from other work in the populism literature; they then uses principal component analysis, finding that the questions loaded in various ways onto the three dimensions of populism we use in our paper (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 196). We relied on their study in much the same way Petersen, Osmundsen, and Arceneaux (2023) used the first of their eight surveys to cut the proposed items in their "need for chaos" scale from an initial 11 options to the final items included in their scale (Petersen, Osmundsen, and Arceneaux 2023, 1490–91). We used four items based on the 14 from Oliver and Rahn, one each for national affiliation and anti-expertise populism, and two to capture different senses of anti-elitism.

Table A5. Populism Question Source Comparison.

Question Type	Oliver and Rahn (2016)	Our Survey
Anti-elitism	People like me don't have much say in what government does. (Likert; PCA Load: 0.611)	People like me don't have much say in what government does. (5-pt. Likert)
Anti-elitism	It doesn't really matter who you vote for because the rich control both political parties (Likert; PCA Load: 0.686)	It doesn't really matter who you vote for because the rich control both political parties. (5-pt. Likert)
Anti-expertise	I'd rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people than the opinions of experts and intellectuals. (Likert; PCA Load: 0.568)	I'd rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people than the opinions of experts and intellectuals. (5-pt. Likert)
National affiliation	How important is being an American to who you are? (7-pt scale; PCA Load, 0.692)	Being an American is very important to who I am. (5-pt. Likert)

To choose among the Oliver and Rahn questions, we focused on questions that both (1) were important along the dimensions Oliver and Rahn identified and (2) would work as stand-alone questions. For example, "when it comes to really important questions, scientific facts don't help very much" had a greater loading on the mistrust of experts scale (0.712) than the question we included ("I'd rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people than the opinions of experts and intellectuals"), but the alternative we included is more explicitly focused on distrusting

experts. We also selected a (modified, for consistency) version of "how important is being an American to who you are?" for our national affiliation question because another leading alternative ("I generally consider myself to be different than most Americans / like most other Americans") might not have worked well in the specific context of Alaska—as the circumstances of Alaskan life are quite different from most other Americans, and the question might have been locally misinterpreted. We used two measures of anti-elitism because one explicitly made the argument "it doesn't really matter who you vote for" while the other included a more generalized complaint about the inability to influence politics.

Our approach—using only four questions, and equally weighting the two anti-elitism questions as a combined measure—comes with some analytical tradeoffs. The disadvantage of this approach is clear: other studies with a greater variety of populism questions can construct much more nuanced scales along particular dimensions of populism. The "need for chaos" scale is a single-dimension attitude measured with seven items and supplemented by two reverse-coded questions (Petersen, Osmundsen, and Arceneaux 2023). Uscinski et al. (2021, 882) have eight items to measure their single anti-establishment dimension. We do not have that amount of information. The benefit of this approach, though, is practical: our survey is short, which made it possible to implement in a difficult polling environment. Surveys attempting to capture the rankings and other information about an RCV procedure must use up a substantial fraction of their survey time asking more questions about vote choice than researchers focused on elections with simpler electoral rules. It was difficult to obtain even 700 responses in Alaska, so additional questions that reduced completion rates or increased costs would have left us with more information about fewer respondents. Using items derived from the Oliver and Rahn study

permitted us to select a handful of pre-tested and validated items to capture much of these populist attitudes while maximizing the number of respondents in our data.

Populism and Support for President Trump

Holding populist attitudes is often linked with supporting former President Trump, and Trump's election in 2016 created the resulting expansion of studies of American populism (Kirk Andrew Hawkins and Littvay 2019). The preponderance of certain kinds of populism among Trump's supporters (Oliver and Rahn 2016) can create an impression of nearly uniform views among his voters. Yet, support for populism is not synonymous with support for Trump. Table A6 displays the responses to our four populist questions by a presidential approval question. Respondents were asked "if you had to choose, in your opinion, which recent president has done a better job in office?" Respondents could choose between Biden and Trump, with Table A6 lumping the "don't know" responses (6% of the total) in with Biden.

There are more populist attitudes expressed by those who also approve of former President Trump. On the anti-elite questions, though, there is some variability in the answers: 33% disagreed or disagreed strongly that "people like me don't have much say in what government does" and 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed that "it really doesn't matter who you vote for because the rich control both parties." There is much less variability for the anti-expert and national identity populism variables: only 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would "rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people" and only 1% strongly disagreed that "being an American is very important to who I am. Even within those questions, though, there is some variability in the responses, ranging from "neither" [agree nor disagree], "agree," and "strongly agree."

Table A6. Populist Attitudes by Trump-Biden Preference. Weighted responses to "if you had to choose, in your opinion, which recent president has done a better job in office?"

Presidential Approval	Biden/DK	Trump	Total
People like me don't have much say in what government does.			
Stg. Dis.	15	10	13
Disagree	32	23	28
Neither	26	18	22
Agree	21	23	22
Stg. Agree	7	26	16
Total	100	100	100
It doesn't really matter who you vote for because the rich control both political parties.			
Stg. Dis.	17	10	13
Disagree	28	28	28
Neither	20	19	19
Agree	29	25	27
Stg. Agree	6	19	12
Total	100	100	100
I'd rather put my trust in the wisdom of ordinary people than the opinions of experts and intellectuals.			
Stg. Dis.	28	2	15
Disagree	26	10	18
Neither	23	24	23
Agree	19	35	27
Stg. Agree	4	30	17
Total	100	100	100
Being an American is very important to who I am.			
Stg. Dis.	8	1	5
Disagree	14	0	8
Neither	21	7	14
Agree	33	21	27
Stg. Agree	24	70	46
Total	100	100	100
Row Totals	52% Biden: 46 DK: 6	48% Trump Only	100%

Anti-Elite Populism and Support for the Top-4/RCV System

Some additional descriptive data behind Figures 1 and 2 from the main text will help illustrate the relationship we observe between the measured anti-elite populism attitudes and support for the Top-4/RCV system. There is little observable relationship between anti-elite populism score and preferences between the top-4/RCV system and the closed partisan primary. This might be surprising at first glance, just looking at the simpler cross-tabs of populism measures and support for different types of electoral systems. For example, for the "People like me don't have much say in what government does" statement, 58% of those who strongly disagree support the top-4/RCV system (that is, those who have a higher sense of their own political efficacy like the system) while only 25% of those who strongly agree (the more populist position) support the top-4/RCV system. How is that possible? And the answer lies with the relationship between partisanship and populism. Once we control for partisan identification (and the other kinds of populism as well), the apparent relationship between anti-elite populism and support for the top-4/RCV disappears. That is the regression result, but also easily visible in a table as well. Table A7 (below) displays these results.

Since there are two kinds of anti-elite populism questions, we weighted them equally, summed up the extent of the agreement with the populist position, and then had the scores to range between 0 and 1 (while also having the other two single populism questions scored the same way). Respodents most vehemently disagreeing with both anti-elite populism questions have a score of 0.000. Respondents strongly agreeing with the anti-elite populism position on both questions have a score of 1.000. For Table A7, Democrats and Independents (including third party voters as well) are treated as one party group (totally 55% of the respondents) while Republicans are treated as the other (making up 45% of the respondents). Table A7 displays the results within these party

groups, focusing only on those supporting the top-4 RCV system and then the totals for all of the party group's respondents for each level of anti-elite score. For example, 17% of the Democrat/Independent group have an anti-elite populism score of 0.625. The vast majority of such respondents favored the top-4/RCV system. Out of all Democrats/Independents, 14% *both* had an anti-elite populism score of 0.625 and supported the top-4/RCV system. We report the data this way (cell percentages, instead of row or column percentages for the top-4/RCV system) to make it clear that Democrats have a very high baseline level of support for the top-4/RCV system (70% overall for the combined D/I category) and, even though some substantial percentage of Democrats will have relatively high anti-elite populism scores, the support for the top-4/RCV system does not systematically diminish enough for us to pick up a statistically significant result (although a larger sample might, if larger samples were achievable in Alaska).

Table A7. Anti-elite Populist Attitudes and Primary Preference by Party Identification Group. Uses the sum of the two anti-elite populism scores, normalized to range from 0 to 1, to examine support for the types of primary systems included in Figure 1. Weighted and sorted by party identification group (Democrats and True Independents vs. Republicans).

Party ID	Democrat, True Ind., 3rd Party		Republican	
PID % of Sample	55%		45%	
Anti-Elite Score	% of Total Ds/Inds Prefer Top-4/RCV by Anti-elite Level	% of Total Ds/Inds (All Preferences) by Anti-elite Level	% of Total Rs Prefer Top-4/RCV by Anti-elite Level	% of Total Rs (All Preferences) by Anti-elite Level
0.000	5	7	0	4
0.125	9	9	1	6
0.250	11	15	2	16
0.375	7	11	3	16
0.500	10	18	2	17
0.625	14	17	1	11
0.750	8	12	1	14
0.875	5	8	0	6
1.000	0	2	1	10
Total	70	100	13	100

In contrast to the Democrats, the baseline level of Republican support for the top-4/RCV system is very low. There are some Republicans spread out across every anti-elite populism level, but for no anti-elite populism level do a majority of such Republicans support the top-4/RCV as their preferred choice. There may be a very slight downwards trend, but we do not identify one as statistically significant in the results presented in Figures 1 and 2 in the main text.

The important thing to see here, though, is that the trend does not obviously slope *up* for either the Democrats or the Republicans. Voters with greater anti-elite populist attitudes are not *more likely* to support the top-4/RCV system. Given that there are ways in which the reform could be cast as an anti-elite populist reform, as Cain's "more democracy" (Cain 2015), this seems to be the likely battleground for future repeal and expansion efforts. This is the pitch current reform advocates appear to make, referring to these types of systems as means of unseating the profit-and-power seeking incumbents of "the politics industry" (Gehl and Porter 2020). There is room to try to grow support among anti-elite populist Republicans in Table A7.

Still, it is important that the trend does not strongly slope *down* either, as it does for the anti-expert and national identity populism scores. The reform advocates were really targeting the politics created around those particular strains of populism, and the public seems to have understood this, with voters holding those views disliking the new system and voters less inclined towards those strains of populism liking the new system.

The Electoral Institution Questions

As mentioned in the main text, the primary election institution preference questions are modified from Sinclair and Sinclair (2021) to include the top-4/RCV procedure. Our analysis also not only uses the factional measure of populism (as in Sinclair and Sinclair 2021) but also has the more nuanced populism questions rooted in Oliver and Rahn (2016), as described above. The questions are presented in Appendix Table A7, below.

Table A8. Institutional Preference Questions. These are the questions summarized in Table 6 of the main text. Options were randomized. Non-response was permitted but not explicitly given as an option.

Question	Text	Options
Party primaries vs. nonpartisan primaries.	The next few questions are about primary elections, the elections which select the candidates that appear on the November ballot. Not all states use the same kind of primary elections. Generally speaking, which type of primary election do you think is best for congressional elections?	1. Party primaries. Voters can participate in a party's primary to choose its nominees. The nominees of each party compete against each other in the general election. 2. Nonpartisan primaries. All voters can choose between all candidates in the primary. The candidates with the most votes compete against each other in the general election, regardless of their party.
Open primaries vs. closed primaries.	For states that do conduct party primary elections, which procedure do you think is best?	1. Open primaries. Each election year, all voters can choose a party at the time of the primary and vote in that party's primary. 2. Closed primaries. Voters register with political parties in advance in order to participate in that party's primary. Some closed primaries allow independent voters to choose a party on election day while others do not.
Top-2 elections vs. Top-4/RCV elections.	For states that do conduct nonpartisan primary elections, which procedure do you think is best?	1. Top-2 primaries with single-vote general elections. Any primary voter can vote for any candidate. The two candidates with the most votes in the primary advance to the general election, regardless of their party. In the general election, voters select which of those two candidates they prefer. 2. Top-4 primaries with ranked-choice general elections. Any primary voter can vote for any candidate. The four candidates with the most votes in the primary advance to the general election, regardless of their party. In the general election, voters rank all four candidates so that votes for the candidates initially placing third or fourth get reallocated to the voters' backup choices.

1. All election results reported in this paper are from the State of Alaska's Division of Elections: https://www.elections.alaska.gov/election-results/.
2. A write-in campaign that is successful to win a seat is incredibly rare in the U.S. Senate. Other than Murkowski's 2010 general election write-in campaign, only one other U.S. Senate write-in campaign elected the write-in candidate: Strom Thurmond, in a 1954 election after Senator Burnet Maybank died in office (Napolio and Grose 2022; U.S. Senate Historical Office 2023).
3. These rules also differ from local nonpartisan elections and other experiments with nonpartisan rules that do not include partisan information on the ballot, so voters are aware of the parties of the candidates in navigating these choices.
4. This has the consequence of making the contest look more competitive than it was because the voters for the third and fourth place candidates were not reallocated, and Dunleavy would likely have won some of them.
5. This quantity may be reported as 49% elsewhere. In Table 1, we used *all* of the recorded ballots in order to keep track of the exhausted ballots. To win, the candidate only needs 50%+1 of the valid votes cast.
6. We are within a few percentage points, even though the question does not mirror the ranked choice procedure: 51% for Peltola, 24% for Palin, and 21% for Begich.
7. We borrow this strategy from Sinclair and Sinclair (2021).
8. As elsewhere in this paper, we include independent leaners with partisans (Keith et al. 1992).
9. See Riker (1988, 31) for a discussion of Condorcet winners and pairwise comparisons in the context of a definition of populism consistent with Cain's (2015) populist notions of electoral reform.
10. Additionally, among Alaska Republicans, 62% preferred the top-2 over the top-4/RCV system while 17% declined to answer the question. These results may be more an expression against top-4/RCV than an endorsement of top-2 type rules, unless the respondents had expressed support for nonpartisan elections on the earlier question. Selecting top-2 from this question was a way of expressing dissatisfaction about the top-4/RCV rules.
11. With the way this was recoded, a respondent is coded as missing if they provided a response in the secondary branch they did not prefer based on other questions. For example, a Republican who preferred partisan primaries and then gave a reply to open/closed is coded as their open/closed reply, even if such a person did not reply to the top-2/top-4/RCV branch.
12. By party identification category, the average anti-elite sentiment is for Democrats 0.43, for Independents 0.56, and for Republicans 0.52. For anti-expert sentiment, it is 0.33 for Democrats, 0.57 for Independents, and 0.68 for Republicans. For national identity, it is 0.58 for Democrats, 0.75 for Independents, and 0.90 for Republicans.
13. The survey allowed for non-binary gender responses. Of the 700, 337 selected male, 351 female, 1 transgender, 2 nonbinary, and 9 other. This presents a challenge for analysis, as the other subcategories are too small for inclusion; they either must be functionally excluded or combined, and neither solution is wholly satisfactory. Our approach (similarly with race/ethnicity and education) has been to try to identify a socially advantaged category, so we followed that approach and defined this variable as explicitly identifying as male or not.
14. This is from the Nov. 3, 2022 report (located here: https://tinyurl.com/yc5tax2a).
15. An odd feature of the Alaska election is that voters *rank all four*, when only three rankings are typically relevant. This is to take into account the possibility of writing in a fifth candidate. You can see the ballot design here: https://www.elections.alaska.gov/election-information/#RankChoice. We correspondingly asked respondents who had already ranked three about a 4th ranking, although only 41 of 700 respondents supplied one. Most replied "no candidate."
16. Although, we should note, it does mean we do not know much about the preferences of registered voters who did not intend to participate. For context, the official 2022 Alaska summary report indicates that there were a total of 267,047 ballots cast in 2022. The equivalent report from 2018 (also a midterm) listed 285,009 ballots were cast. So these are roughly on the same order of magnitude.