Ranked-choice Voting –
The Maine Experience

Presented by
Julie Flynn and Melissa Packard
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2001 – 2013: Several RCV bills proposed by the Legislature but not adopted


11/8/2016: Voters approve RCV (52% to 48%) for elections after 1/1/18
And then the fun began. . .
Uncertainty Regarding Adoption

* 2/2/17  State Senate seeks advisory opinion from Maine Supreme Judicial Court

* 5/23/17  MSJC issues unanimous advisory opinion that RCV is unconstitutional in General Elections for Governor, State Senate and State Representative.
10/23/2017  Legislature delayed RCV pending a constitutional amendment

10/27/2017  RCV Proponents begin people’s veto to overturn the delayed implementation

3/5/18      Veto petition certified as valid - which stayed the RCV delay bill from taking effect
The people’s veto moved to statewide vote on the June 12, 2018 Primary Election Day

Maine now had 100 days to implement
But Wait – Here Come the Lawsuits

* 3/30/18 Committee for RCV files suit to require SOS to implement RCV for 6/12/18 Primary

* 4/3/18 Maine Senate President files suit to challenge use of RCV in Primary

* 4/17/18 MSJC rules that RCV is in effect for Primary Election
I've lived a life that's full
I've traveled each and every highway
But more, much more than this
I did it my way

Frank Sinatra
Things to Consider

* Legal Framework
* Election Organization
* Technology
* Ballot Design
* RCV Counting Process
* Facilities
* Costs
* Staffing
* Voter Outreach
Is the statute clear, complete and consistent?

Can you influence the drafting process?

Do you have rulemaking authority?

How many candidates can be ranked?

Are the counting requirements defined?
Election Organization

- Elections conducted by about 500 municipalities – between 7 and 57,000 voters
- No county-level election admin or facilities
- State leases precinct tabulators for 265 towns
- 226 still hand-count
- Did not use Election Reporting software
- State designs all ballots, contractor prints
- State creates and tests all election media
- Paper returns due by 3rd business day after election (law prohibits electronic transmission)
Purchased 4 computers with hardened set up for a database server

Cast Vote Records (CVRs) downloaded from DS200 memory devices

Ballots from hand-count municipalities scanned using DS850 to create CVRs

CVRs combined into 1 database using Election Reporting Manager software (ERM)

Express Runoff performs RCV counting rounds using Maine’s specific requirements
Uniform Ballot Design

300 styles for General Election

Grid layout – RCV and plurality races must be printed on separate ballot pages

Ballot design/proofing/coding/testing – over 1100 staff person hours for November
RCV Process – Before Election Day

- Process similar to statewide recounts
- Rules defined process, facilities, staff, ballot retrieval
- Contracted with tabulator vendor to lease central count hardware and software, including algorithm
- Contracted with private courier for ballot retrieval
- Instructions provided to municipalities on counting and post-election ballot retrieval
Day after election, determined races subject to RCV:
- June – Democratic Primary for Governor & CG2
- November – CG 2
- Notified municipalities to be ready for retrieval
- Courier retrieved Thursday and Friday after Election
- June Primary: RCV Count Friday, then Monday – Weds
- Nov General: RCV Count Friday, Saturday, then Monday (holiday) through Thursday at noon
Facilities

* Centrally located state-owned facility
* Motion detection cameras and controlled access
* Public access provided during processing times
* Sufficient space (barely) for the counting process
* Secure storage for ballots and memory media
Facilities
Costs – RCV Only

- Start-up costs – LAN hardware: $29,231
- June Primary: $72,200
- November General: $340,373
- Total 2018 Costs for RCV: $441,804

Note: General Election includes $268,173 to print a separate referendum ballot
Voter Outreach

* RCV Resources page: www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/upcoming/rcv.html

* Animated Video
* FAQs
* Sample ballots
* Timeline
* Examples of marked ballots
New RCV Ballot Marking Instructions Poster – in each voting place and voting booth and town offices
Successes

* Transparent process
* No hard deadlines for completion
* Provided data as quickly as possible
* Well-organized processes, efficient team
* Most importantly: **Accurate results!**
Lessons Learned

- Try to get sufficient funding in advance
- Secure larger facility to avoid space constraints
- Have additional staff trained and available to assist where needed
- Increase technical capacity to upload electronic results and scan paper ballots
- Increased voter outreach (subject to funding)
- Increased training of election officials
Contact Us

* Julie Flynn – julie.flynn@maine.gov
  * 207-624-7736
* Melissa Packard – melissa.packard@maine.gov
  * 207-624-7650