

## 19. Sec. 5.5 – Ranked-Choice Voting

# Charter Review Committee

## Amendment Summary Section 5.5 Elections

### **Brief Summary of Amendment**

- Specifies that ranked-choice voting is among the election-related matters that the City Council may set forth in ordinance, but does not require that ranked-choice voting be used or adopted.
- States that in the event ranked-choice voting is adopted by ordinance that the election procedures contained in that ordinance would supersede any conflicting election procedures in charter.

### **Committee Vote**

**Yes:** Katie Baird, Nicholas Carr, Maricres Castro, Jason Gauthier, Andre Jimenez, Melissa Malott, Latasha Palmer, Andrea Reay, Rebecca Stith, Steve Wamback, Diamatris Winston, Lok Yin Wu

**No:** Patrick Fischer, Bryan Flint

**Abstain:** None

**Absent:** None

### **Amendment:**

**Section 5.5** – All matters pertaining to elections and not provided for in the charter or by law, which may include ranked-choice voting, shall be as provided by ordinance. No informalities in conducting municipal elections shall invalidate the same if they have been conducted fairly and in substantial conformity with the requirements of this charter. In the event the City Council by ordinance authorizes the use of ranked-choice voting for the election of city officers in any municipal election, the nomination and election procedures contained in such ordinance shall prevail over any conflicting procedures contained in this charter.

### **Amendment Positions**

#### **Rationale for Amendment:**

The proposed amendment supersedes conflicting charter election provisions and establishes a straightforward path for the council to adopt ranked-choice voting. Authorizing ranked-choice voting (RCV) in Tacoma's charter is vital for revitalizing our democracy. RCV ensures every vote counts. When Tacoma adopts RCV, leveraging existing resources and partnerships would streamline implementation and reduce costs. RCV has many benefits. It fosters positive campaigning while ensuring equitable representation. It may also boost voter participation and save time and money. Studies show RCV is

user-friendly and does not negatively impact voter behavior. Cities like Seattle and Portland are implementing RCV, which can serve as models for Tacoma. Tacoma should lead the way by modernizing our electoral process and empowering its residents through ranked-choice voting.

**Dissenting Position:**

Ranked-choice voting (RCV) requires voters to rank candidates in order of preference, which may not accurately reflect their true sentiments. RCV introduces complexity and potential confusion into the electoral process. Tabulation process in RCV can be convoluted, leading to delays in election results and increased costs for administering elections. Furthermore, RCV can perpetuate a lack of accountability, as candidates may focus more on being the second or third choice of voters rather than addressing issues head-on. RCV systems often remove the primary election from the process when primaries create a lower barrier entry for new and emerging candidates. Ultimately, RCV undermines the simplicity and clarity of traditional voting systems and may not necessarily lead to better representation or governance.