



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Instant Runoff Voting Task Force

Date: April 25, 2006

To: Council Member Hodges, Chair
Intergovernmental Relations Committee

Subject: Progress of the Instant Runoff Voting Task Force

Previous Directives:

On March 10, 2005, the City Council approved a resolution creating an IRV task force to look at proposal(s) for IRV in Minneapolis.

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Presenter in Committee: Council Member Cam Gordon, Chair of IRV Task Force

Background/Supporting Information:

Members of the IRV task force have met three times. The first meeting was primarily an overview of Instant Runoff Voting and procedures for Charter amendments.

At the second meeting, group members discussed issues regarding the constitutionality of the proposed ranked choice voting system and the latitude that statutory law allows charter cities with regards to conducting elections. Members also reviewed information on use of IRV systems in other jurisdictions in the U.S.

The third meeting focused on public and voter education issues. Elections staff outlined voter education and election judge education efforts that would be needed and estimated costs for these efforts. Members reviewed education efforts used in San Francisco.

In its remaining two meetings, the task force will consider polling equipment needs and procedures, and will conduct a conference call with elections staff in San Francisco, which used an IRV system in its 2004 elections for Board of Supervisors.

The task force will submit a final report after May 5.

From the first three meetings, several issues have emerged on which the Council may wish to take action or provide further direction to the task force.

Consensus issues from first three meetings

A 1/3/2006 City Attorney's opinion to the Charter Commission said that "the City of Minneapolis appears to be able to provide for a new voting method by charter amendment pursuant to MN Statute 410.21 (2005)." Nevertheless, members of the task force agree that it would be helpful to work with our intergovernmental relations staff to request that the Legislature amend MN Statute 410.21 specifically to allow charter cities to use IRV. We suggest adding this amendment to the City's legislative agenda for 2007.

Members agree that we should continue to seek ways to test the legality of the proposed IRV system. We are seeking a "letter opinion" from the MN Attorney General's office on the legality of the specific proposal for IRV in Minneapolis.

Outstanding issues from first three meetings

In reviewing IRV procedures, some task force members expressed concerns about the application of IRV to elections for multiple-seat independent boards (Park Board At-Large, Library Board, School Board, Board of Estimate & Taxation). The system for counting votes in multi-seat elections includes a step to redistribute votes from candidates who have already surpassed the election threshold.

The City Attorney's office was asked to suggest arguments that the City might use in case of a legal challenge to the IRV system on constitutional grounds or on statutory grounds.

The group needs more information about how charter amendments would be reconciled, should more than one be approved by voters. For example, if voters approve the Charter revisions proposed by the Charter Commission (which do not include IRV) AND a ballot question approving IRV, how would the Charter language be resolved?

The Better Ballot Campaign's petitions do not have language allowing flexibility in implementation date. Some flexibility may be necessary in order to allow time for (for example) equipment certification, rules and procedures development and adoption, and adequate public education. The group will look into how some flexibility in implementation date could be included in Charter amendments establishing an IRV voting system.