

Ranked Choice Voting for County Commissioner

You may notice a change on your General Election ballot. If three or more candidates are nominated, Benton County Commission positions will be elected by Ranked Choice Voting.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Ranked Choice Voting? Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a new contest format where voters rank candidates instead of choosing just one.

Why change the system, and why change it now? In November 2016, a majority of Benton County voters chose to amend the County Charter to elect county officials using RCV. The November 2020 General Election, may be the first election in which voters cast their vote in a contest using RCV. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is only used when a minimum of three candidates are nominated for the countywide office in the General Election.

Will Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) be used in all County elections? No. RCV will be used only for county elected officials submitted to voters in general elections; not for party primaries. Currently, the only countywide elected offices are the County Commissioners and the County Sheriff. **Please Note:** The Sheriff's office is a non-partisan office that nominates no more than two candidates for the General Election Ballot. Therefore, the Sheriff position will NOT be elected using RCV.

How do I cast my vote in a Ranked Choice contest? Ranked Choice Voting is easy! Instead of choosing just one candidate, use your ballot to rank your top three candidates, from your first choice to your second and third choices. Find the name of your first choice candidate and completely fill in the oval next to their name in the "1st Choice" column. Then find the name of your second choice, and fill in the oval next to their name in the "2nd Choice" column. Finally, find the name of your third choice, and fill in the oval next to their name in the "3rd Choice" column.

Please Note: You can use the Write-In space to enter a candidate's name that is NOT on the ballot that you would like to select for your 1st, 2nd or 3rd Choice in the RCV contest.

What if I don't want to rank candidates for all three choices? We encourage voters to rank the full range of candidates. If you choose not to, your ranked vote may not be counted in later rounds if your top candidate(s) are eliminated and the lower choice position(s) are left blank. These are called "Exhausted Votes".

Does my vote get counted if I rank my favorite choice in every position? Your vote will count only once for that candidate and will not help your candidate's chances of winning. If voting goes to later rounds because your 1st Choice candidate has been eliminated, your ballot will be nullified and counted as an "Exhausted Vote". This is because your subsequent choice(s) would not be attributable to a remaining candidate.

Can I give different candidates the same ranking? No. When the ballot counter reads multiple candidates within the ranked choice being tallied, that vote is nullified and tallied as an "Over Vote".

What happens if I make a mistake with my ballot? Mistakes happen, so if you make one, don't be shy! Call the County Clerk's Elections office at 541.766.6756 and we will be happy to help you get a replacement ballot, if needed.

How are ranked choice ballots counted? To win a ranked choice election, a candidate must receive 50% plus one vote of total votes cast for that office.

After all the votes are in, counters will tally first choice votes. If no candidate wins by receiving 50% plus one majority of the total "first choice" votes cast, the candidate with the lowest number of first choice votes is eliminated, and the "second choice" candidate votes on those ballots are tallied.

Votes are recalculated, and if one candidate achieves a 50% plus one majority, they are declared the winner. If not, we repeat the process. The candidate in last-place is eliminated and the "third choice" candidate votes on those ballots are tallied. If the third choice on those ballots has already been eliminated, the subsequent choice is counted, and so on until the ballot is exhausted or a winner has been determined. The process is repeated until one candidate reaches a 50% plus one majority and is declared the winner.

What County Commissioner contest results will we see ON election night? The Election Office will release ONLY the first choice ranking results for County Commissioner after 8:00 pm on election night. These unofficial first choice ranking results will be updated along with the other contest results, including the final Unofficial Election Night results. We cannot announce a tentative winner until all votes are tallied, including Benton County ballots returned in other Oregon counties and those resolved during the 14-day ballot challenge/resolution period. Following the challenge period, the county must certify the election results no later than the 20th day after the election date.

If the race is not close, we may have a good idea who likely won on election night. This is not a big difference compared to previous elections. How many times have we gone to bed on election night thinking a particular candidate or ballot measure was winning in a close race, only to find after all ballots are counted that the outcome had changed?

Ranked Choice Voting results are no different. If the race is close, final determination will depend on the counting of ballots returned in another Oregon county and the count of any challenged and provisional ballots being included in the final contest results.

When will ranked choice contest results for County Commissioner be updated AFTER election night? We will update the results after the 14-day challenge period has passed and all accepted ballots have been tallied. If a nominated or write-in candidate receives more than half of the first-choice votes cast (50% + plus one), that candidate may be announced the unofficial winner prior to certification.

The official winner will only be declared when the results are certified.

Round-by-Round Vote Totals: A report containing round-by-round contest results for County Commission positions will be displayed at www.co.benton.or.us/elections and www.BentonBetterBallot.com after the challenge period has past and the election returns are certified.

When will the final CERTIFIED election results be available? Benton County can only certify election results after the 14-day ballot challenge/resolution period has passed and no later than the 20th day following the General Election.

Benton Better Ballot

#BentonBetterBallot



“Ranked Choice Voting is easy, but change can be hard – if you have questions, we are here to get you answers!”

The Benton Better Ballot campaign uses five Pacific Northwest inspired animals as mock candidates and a legendary spokesperson to illustrate the Ranked Choice Voting process.



Sally Salmon



Bill Beaver



Frieda Tree Frog



Olivia Otter



Santiago Sturgeon

	1 st CHOICE	2 nd CHOICE	3 rd CHOICE
Sally Salmon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bill Beaver	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frieda Tree Frog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Olivia Otter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Santiago Sturgeon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

mock election practice ballot

To access a practice RCV contest instructional video and additional information, go to:

BentonBetterBallot.com
#BentonBetterBallot

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram at @BentonCoGov

Talk to a real-live person to get
your questions answered: (541) 766-6756.

