

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact § 24.2-673.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to elections; conduct of election; ranked choice voting; locally elected offices; report.

[S 428]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 24.2-673.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-673.1. (Expires July 1, 2031) Ranked choice voting.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Ranked choice voting" means a method of casting and tabulating votes in which (i) voters rank candidates in order of preference, (ii) tabulation proceeds in rounds such that in each of round either a candidate or candidates are elected or the last-place candidate is defeated, (iii) votes for voters' next-ranked candidates are transferred from elected or defeated candidates, and (iv) tabulation ends when the number of candidates elected equals the number of offices to be filled. "Ranked choice voting" is known as "instant runoff voting" when electing a single office and "single transferable vote" when electing multiple offices.

"Ranking" means the ordinal number assigned on a ballot by a voter to a candidate to express the voter's preference for that candidate. ~~Ranking number one~~ The first ranking is the highest ranking, the second ranking ~~number two~~ is the next-highest ranking, and so on, consecutively, up to the number of candidates indicated on the ballot.

B. Elections of members of a county board of supervisors or a city council may be conducted by ranked choice voting pursuant to this section. The decision to conduct an election by ranked choice voting shall be made, in consultation with the local electoral board and general registrar, by a majority vote of the board of supervisors or city council that the office being elected serves *and shall be subject to a determination of feasibility by the State Board. Any decision to conduct an election by ranked choice voting made by a local governing body shall be transmitted to the State Board, which shall provide a determination of feasibility within 10 days of receipt of the decision or, in the case of a shared office, within 10 days of receipt of the decisions of all of the localities that share the office.*

C. In any election conducted by ranked choice voting, as soon as the polls are closed on the day of the election, the officers of election for each precinct shall proceed to ascertain the vote and prepare returns for the first rankings made for such election in the same manner as provided for votes in other elections under this article. The results for elections conducted by ranked choice voting shall be reported along with other results reported on election night, except that such results shall clearly be identified as preliminary and based on the first rankings in a ranked choice voting election.

D. In any election conducted by ranked choice voting final tabulation of votes shall be conducted at the meeting of the electoral board held pursuant to § 24.2-671.

E. If, in the process of tabulating final results for an election conducted by ranked choice voting, any machine readable ballot is damaged or defective so that it cannot properly be counted by the electronic voting systems, a true duplicate copy shall be made of the damaged ballot by a team of election officials representing both parties. The duplicate ballot shall be substituted for the damaged ballot. Every duplicate ballot shall be clearly labeled as such and shall bear an identifier that shall be recorded on the damaged ballot.

F. The Department shall make public the total number and percentage of votes each candidate received in each round of the official tabulation, including votes for candidates who have withdrawn pursuant to § 24.2-612.2, and ballot-level ranking data on an election-by-election basis to the extent feasible and consistent with the need to maintain voter privacy.

G. The State Board shall provide standards for vote tabulating software for use with existing voting systems in elections conducted by ranked choice voting. Any person, firm, or corporation manufacturing, owning, or offering for sale any vote tabulation software designed to be used with existing voting systems may apply to the State Board, in the manner prescribed by the Board, to have examined a production version of such software. A local governing body that makes the decision to conduct elections by ranked choice voting shall provide for the use of vote tabulating software approved by the Board in any such elections.

H. The State Board ~~may~~ shall promulgate regulations for the proper and efficient administration of elections determined by ranked choice voting, including (i) procedures for tabulating *and reporting* votes in rounds, (ii) procedures for determining winners in elections for offices to which only one candidate is

57 being elected and to which more than one candidate is being elected, and (iii) standards for ballots
58 pursuant to § 24.2-613, notwithstanding the provisions of subsection E of that section.

59 **D. 1.** The State Board may administer or prescribe standards for a voter outreach and public
60 information program for use by any locality conducting ranked choice voting pursuant to this section.
61 *The State Board shall produce generalized voter education materials on ranked choice voting that shall*
62 *be published on its website and shall assist any locality that has made the decision to conduct elections*
63 *by ranked choice voting in developing voter education materials specific to that locality upon request.*

64 **J.** A local electoral board may request a risk-limiting audit of an election conducted by ranked
65 choice voting pursuant to subsection D of § 24.2-671.2. Any such risk-limiting audit shall be limited to
66 an audit of first rankings reported by voting systems. An election conducted by ranked choice voting
67 shall not be included in any random drawing required by subsection C of § 24.2-671.2, nor shall any
68 risk-limiting audit of such election satisfy any of the requirements of subdivision C 4 of § 24.2-671.2.

69 **K.** For the purposes of conducting a recount pursuant to Article 1 (§ 24.2-800 et seq.) of Chapter 8,
70 the State Board shall have the authority to create and modify recount procedures to the extent necessary
71 to accommodate a recount of an election conducted by ranked choice voting.

72 **2.** That the Department of Elections (the Department) shall review the testing and approval
73 framework for voting equipment in the Commonwealth. In conducting its review, the Department
74 shall (i) review the types of voting equipment covered by state law; (ii) review emerging forms of
75 voting equipment, such as electronic pollbooks, risk-limiting audit tools, and tabulation software,
76 including such audit tools and software that can be purchased and operated separate from existing
77 voting systems; (iii) review the roles and responsibilities of state and local election officials in the
78 testing and approval of voting equipment; (iv) review any existing testing and approval
79 frameworks for emerging forms of voting equipment; (v) develop recommendations for objective
80 methods of evaluating the performance of emerging forms of voting equipment to determine if
81 they are appropriately executing the elections tasks for which they are intended; and (vi) make
82 other recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted. The Department shall
83 submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its
84 review no later than the first day of the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The
85 executive summary and report shall be submitted for publication as a report document as
86 provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of
87 legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.