

**Instant Run-off Voting (IRV)**  
**Office of the City Clerk**  
**Monday, September 26, 2005**

The idea of Instant Run-off Voting (IRV) is an exciting one. The Office of the City Clerk has just started researching the topic in terms of implementation feasibility and impacts. The following issues have been raised as aspects of IRV that would benefit from some consideration/further review:

Defining the System

There are various permutations of IRV (e.g., San Francisco refers to it as "ranked choice voting (RCV)"). We would like to do some benchmarking with other jurisdictions that have implemented some form of IRV (Berkeley, San Francisco, San Leandro, Oakland, Santa Clara County) and ask questions about the timeframe for implementation, issues or questions that came up, community contact & education, etc.

Charter Amendment

A Charter amendment would be needed prior to implementing any new IRV process. The extent of the Charter amendment would depend on what Council ultimately elects to pursue, and the City Attorney's input would be critical. In addition to allowing for IRV, other potential Charter-change issues include but are not necessarily limited to the question of consolidation, and the timing of the IRV election (i.e. June v. November, or ?).

If IRV is approved, there would be a delay of several years before its implementation, because of hardware/software certification requirements.

The Ballot

If we continue to consolidate our elections, IRV could probably not be accommodated on the regular ballot provided by the ROV. The amount of space our races would require has the potential to triple. This could push things to a second ballot page, which would increase costs and difficulty for every jurisdiction on the ballot. The City of SD would pay all costs, as we are the only jurisdiction considering IRV in the County at this time.

Voter Education

As mentioned immediately above, on a consolidated ballot, the City's race would look, and be, different from everything else on the ballot with IRV. Even if we went to stand-alone elections, intensive voter education would be required to insure that voters understand how to mark the multiple columns of bubbles.

## Software & Hardware

The ROV's current software cannot support IRV. The RFP with Diebold calls ultimately for the capability, but not presently. Once the tabulation software is changed to accommodate IRV, the system must be tested by an independent testing authority, federally qualified, and recertified by the State of California.

It's possible that there is a vendor the City could contract with in place of the ROV, should we opt for stand-alone elections. San Francisco uses ES&S. We would need to research this possibility in order to assess cost, feasibility and reliability issues.