CITY OF RICHMOND CHARTER AMENDMENT INITIATIVE

"Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) Election Reform Act"

INITIATIVE TEXT

The people of the City of Richmond do ordain as follows:

SECTION 1. Title

This Act shall be known and may be cited as "**Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) Election Reform Act**" and amends the City of Richmond Charter to assure that elected officers must be elected by majority vote.

SECTION 2. Purpose and Intent

This initiative seeks to reform the election process in the City of Richmond to improve accountability, governance, and representation. Currently, a candidate for City Council or Mayor can be elected to office with less than a majority of the vote cast. To represent the will of at least the majority of the voters, City Councilmembers and the Mayor should not be elected to office without receiving a majority of the vote cast for that elective office.

This Charter amendment will cause City Councilmembers to be elected by a majority of the vote using an Instant Runoff Voting system ("IRV") also known as ranked choice voting. Under IRV, voters rank the candidates, and if a candidate has more than 50% of the votes, that candidate wins. If no one gets more than 50%, an "instant run-off" is held, in which the candidate in last place is eliminated and the 2nd choice of those voters are counted. Thus, if your first-choice candidate gets eliminated, your vote goes to your next choice. If there is still no candidate with more than 50%, the process is repeated until someone gets a majority (more than 50%) of the votes.

The Instant Runoff Voting method functions just like any runoff election, only with IRV, the runoff takes place instantly as part of the general election. This provides the advantages of a runoff without the time and expense for the City and candidates of adding a city primary election in March or June of election years. Also, primaries always have lower voter participation – for instance the 2022 federal primary election in Richmond had about a third fewer voters than the November general election that year. The fact that all voting in IRV continues to take place during the November general election ensures that more voters will have a voice in choosing city leaders.

Instant Runoff Voting maximizes representation because candidates must have the support of a majority of voters in order to be elected.

Instant Runoff Voting maximizes voter participation because all voting takes place during the General Election in November, which always has the largest turnout of any election.

Because building connections and coalitions is rewarded in Instant Runoff Voting, candidates are incentivized to campaign in a positive, issue-oriented manner that will help maintain Richmond's community spirit during and after each election season.

SECTION 3. The following sections are added to Article V, Elections, of the Richmond City Charter:

Sec. 3. Instant Runoff Voting. Each City elective office (including City Councilmembers and Mayor) shall be elected by an Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) system in each election, including

special elections. A majority (more than half), of the votes cast for all candidates, or a majority of the operative votes on continuing ballots in subsequent rounds, is required for the election of a candidate to each such office as determined by the IRV system. At each round of counting, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and those voters who have had their first choice eliminated will have their votes go to their second-choice candidate, which is then considered the operative vote, and continues in subsequent rounds if needed.

Sec. 4. <u>Enabling Ordinance.</u> Consistent with the purpose and intent expressed herein, the City Council is hereby authorized to adopt an implementing ordinance ("IRV Ordinance") setting forth the details of the IRV process to establish any necessary specific procedures to be utilized in the IRV to provide clarity and assure the will of the majority prevails.

Sec. 5. <u>Implementation</u>. This ballot measure will be implemented and effective for the November 2026 election, unless the voting equipment is not ready, in which case the County elections official may opt out for one election cycle.

SECTION 4. <u>Conflicting Measures.</u> The People of the City find and declare that the provisions of this initiative may conflict with one or more provisions of other initiative measures. This measure shall be deemed to conflict in its entirety with any other measure at the same election that would change the method of elections for the City of Richmond Council and/or Mayor. Should more than one such measure pass pertaining to Richmond municipal elections, the measure receiving the most votes shall pass and the other measure shall be void in its entirety.