

# Ranked Choice Voting FAQ

## Salt Lake City

### Quick bullet points:

- Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to select candidates in preferential order.
- In Salt Lake City, voters will be able to rank up to 10 candidates.
  - Voters will be able to rank up to 10 candidates due to software limitations.
  - For example, if there are 10 candidates there are 10 preference rankings; if there are 5 candidates, only 5 preference rankings will be listed.
- Date Changes
  - There will be no Primary Election.
  - Declaration of Candidacy period has moved from June 1-7 to August 8-15, 2023, Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. (When candidates formally declare their intent to run for office, this action is designed to officially place the candidate's name on the ballot).
  - The General Election (Election Day) remains on November 21, 2023. Early voting could begin around November 7, 2023.
- Individuals interested in being placed on the ballot, may begin campaigning at any point of an election cycle so long as they open a Personal Campaign Committee with the Recorder's office for the purposes of raising or spending funds.

### What is Ranked Choice Voting?

Ranked Choice Voting (also known as Instant Runoff Voting) can be used (or is best used) for single-winner elected positions. This method was used in 23 municipalities in 2021 for Municipal Elections. One of the participating municipalities was Salt Lake City. A list of all cities participating for the 2023 election can be found at <https://vote.utah.gov/current-election-information/> The method decreases the splitting of the vote (choosing one over the other).

Voters may select candidates in their preferred order, instead of simply voting against the candidate with whom the voter disagrees. In Salt Lake City, voters will be able to rank up to 10 (depending on how many Declare Candidacy in August).

### How does it work?

Ballots are printed with the names listed and 10 ranking positions; voters rank the candidates by filling in the bubble in the appropriate column with the preferred ranking. More detailed ballot instructions will be provided with every ballot mailed.

The tabulation and winner will be based on the following process:

- If a candidate has received more than 50% of the overall vote, they are automatically declared the winner of the single-seat race.
- If none of the candidates receive more than 50% of the overall vote, the candidate with the lowest percentage of overall votes is eliminated and those who had the eliminated candidate selected as their first choice will now have their vote counted for the candidate they chose as their second preference. This process of elimination continues until a candidate crosses the 50% threshold and is declared the winner.

**What order will the candidates be in?**

Candidates are positioned in order of the Master Ballot Position List, which is established on even-numbered election years by the Lieutenant Governor’s Office in accordance with §20A-6-305.

Additionally, here is the current Master Ballot Position List and the order that the 2023 ballot will be in:

MASTER BALLOT POSITION LIST

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q	P	N	U	Y	M	E	D	T	O

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
H	K	I	L	W	R	F	G	C	X

21	22	23	24	25	26
A	V	Z	B	S	J

Candidates are listed in the above order with the following parameters guiding their position on the ballot:

- The candidate’s surnames (last name) as it is written on the Declaration of Candidacy.
- If two or more candidates have surnames (last names) that begin with the same letter, the list shall be applied to each subsequent letter in the candidates surnames (last names).
- If two or more candidates have an identical surname (last name), the list shall be applied to the candidates’ given first names.

**What happens if the voter chooses only one candidate?**

If the voter chooses one candidate, then if during the elimination period that candidate is eliminated, their vote would not transfer to their second choice.

### **What happens if the voter skips a number in ranking candidates?**

A ranking is not considered valid if a voter indicates the same rank for more than one candidate for the ballot-counting phase or if the voter skips two or more consecutive numbers before ranking another candidate.

### **What happens if there is a tie?**

Ties are broken by lot in Utah (e.g. flip a coin, draw straws, etc.) It's the same for Ranked Choice Voting, so if two candidates still tie, the election administrator will bring both candidates in, everyone will agree on a tie-breaking method (lots, coin toss, rock/paper/scissors, etc.) and then the candidate who wins the agreed upon tie-breaking method will be declared the winner.

### **Will it take longer to see results?**

What may be different from prior elections is how the results will look on a daily basis. Where RCV may eliminate candidates in rounds, the results may favor one candidate but as one is eliminated, the votes where the eliminated candidate was ranked as the voters first choice will then be transferred to their second preferred candidate. This could cause the period where ballots are being counted to show different candidates in the lead on a day-to-day basis.

Results can be delayed up to a week if a recount is required. Per §20A-6-602(12), "Notwithstanding §20A-4-301, a board of municipal canvassers may extend the canvass deadline by up to seven additional days, if necessary, to conduct a recount required under Subsection (10)."

The time period for results remains the same amount of time in state statute. Cities will have 2 weeks to canvass the election from the date of the election, and the last day for the board of canvassers to meet is December 6, 2023. What may be different to prior elections are how the results look daily. Where RCV may eliminate candidates in rounds, the results may favor one candidate but as one is eliminated the votes where the eliminated candidate was ranked as the voters first choice will then be transferred to their second favorite candidate. This could cause the period where ballots are being counted to show different candidates in the lead on a day-to-day basis.

### **What will my ballot look like?**

Ballots will be printed by the Salt Lake County Clerk's Office who is contracting with the City on this year's election. They will provide a sample ballot to the city further along in the process and it will be posted to the public.

### **Will it still be a by-mail election?**

Yes. The State of Utah is an entirely vote by mail state. However, cities and counties may provide in-person polling locations, these will be determined by Salt Lake County and will be posted on their website and on the City Recorder's website closer to the General Election, November 21, 2023.

### **How does this change the election timeline?**

The timeline has a few changes throughout; however, the General Election remains the same as directed by the state and will take place on November 21, 2023. As the municipal race will not have a primary election, the Declaration of Candidacy period has been moved from early June to August 8-15.

### **Does the time period change effect candidates?**

Yes and no. Overall candidates can begin campaigning now and continue campaigning up to the General Election. However, they are not official candidates with confirmed validity until after August 15.

The formal period for declaring candidacy is August 8-15 at 5:00pm. So, while the declaration period moves from June to August, it does not prohibit them from beginning to campaign. The only necessary thing for candidates to do immediately if they wish to raise or spend funds is to open a Personal Campaign Committee with the City Recorder's Office which essentially requires candidates to report how they are raising and spending funds.

### **Do other cities or states do this?**

In 2021, 23 cities in Utah used Ranked Choice Voting, including Salt Lake City. In 2023, the following Cities have indicated they will be using Ranked Choice Voting:

- Millcreek
- Genola
- Midvale
- Payson
- Vineyard
- South Salt Lake
- Heber
- Kearns
- Lehi
- Woodland Hills
- Magna
- Sat Lake City

Resource: <https://vote.utah.gov/current-election-information/>

**Have more questions about Ranked Choice Voting? Great! Send them to [elections@slcgov.com](mailto:elections@slcgov.com) and the most commonly asked ones will be added to this FAQ.**