

My name is Liz White, and I run a nonpartisan nonprofit organization called UpVote Virginia that promotes democracy reform and good governance in Virginia.

My organization and the coalition with whom we work - including the League of Women Voters of Virginia and Veterans for All Voters - were very involved in the implementation of ranked choice voting in Arlington, VA, in June 2023. RCV was used in the Democratic primary for County Board of Supervisors and was the first state-run RCV election in the state.

Arlington is represented by 5 at-large board members, and every four years, they elect two members at a time. 2023 was a two-seat year, so Arlington piloted a proportional form of RCV using Single Transferable Vote. Despite some grumbling after the fact from voters whose first choice candidate did not win, reviews from voters were overall positive, and the election delivered a fair and representative outcome – [84%](#) of voters ranked a winning candidate first, second, or third on their ballot.

In an [unscientific survey](#) conducted by the County Board, 70% of voters rated their RCV experience as “positive,” “exceptional,” or “fair.” 96% said they had heard about RCV going into the ballot box, and [ballot data](#) shows that 90% of voters who ranked a low-performing candidate first ranked at least one backup choice too.

Although the Arlington County Board did not opt to use RCV in the 2023 general election – which would have changed the rules of the game after campaigning had already begun – members [praised](#) election administrators for their “flawless execution” of the primary, while also pointing to a desire for additional voter outreach and education. Then in December 2023, the last meeting before the new members were seated, the **Board voted unanimously to make RCV the election method for all future County Board primaries.**

It’s important to note that current Virginia law only allows localities to use RCV for city councils and county boards of supervisors, so Arlington is using the policy to the broadest extent possible. Far from the perception that this locality tried RCV one time and hated it, the reality is that they continue to expand the use of RCV. In fact, the Board is voting this Saturday (Feb. 24, 2024) on an ordinance to pilot the use of RCV in their 2024 general election, a measure which is expected to pass unanimously.

Every state and locality is different, and ranked choice voting is hardly a one-size-fits-all reform. It’s a tool - one that can benefit voters and political parties alike. We encourage you not to ban its use and certainly not to do so based on an outdated narrative about Arlington, VA.