

From: [Marilyn Alwan](#)
To: [CityCouncil-List](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda item 7D. 2 April 2024 Meeting
Date: Monday, April 1, 2024 4:28:28 PM

1 April 2024

Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft and Alameda City Council members:

I support Ranked Choice Voting. It is an electoral reform that increases participation and civility from candidates and voters alike. It also ensures that the majority of voters pick the winners.

I am heartened by the growing awareness of RCV's benefits the League of Women Voters achieved through its recent signature gathering effort however I believe that any electoral reform requires community outreach and education. Thus, community forums are necessary, and the public will need to understand the problems the city council is trying to solve.

Thank you.

Marilyn Alwan

Resident of Ffth Street, Alameda

From: [James Johnston \(mail\)](#)
To: [CityCouncil-List](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments regarding April 2 agenda item 7-D in favor of Ranked Choice Voting
Date: Monday, April 1, 2024 2:22:56 AM

Hi,

This email is in regards to April 2 city council meeting, agenda item 7-D: ...
"Recommendation to Provide Direction on Election Reform Issues."

I'd like to briefly state that I am happy to hear that the city council is discussing ranked choice voting. **I'd like to voice my support for proportional ranked choice voting.**

Our national political system is a mess, with winner-take-all elections determining who occupies Congress and the presidency. **While I'd love to see election reform take place on the federal level for federal offices, it seems impossible at this time. For now, change must begin at the local level.** Generally speaking, after enough voters become familiar with ranked choice voting at the local level, then it becomes more feasible to promote this option at the state level, and then, eventually, the national level.

When I voted in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary, there were a few candidates I preferred over other candidates. I would have very much liked to be able to rank them from favorite to least favorite.

And similarly, when I voted in the most recent Alameda election to fill the city council seats, there were a couple council member candidates who I preferred over others. Again, I'd like to be able to rank them according to the ranked choice voting system. If my top choice doesn't win, I'd like my vote to still count as a 2nd or 3rd choice for one of the other candidates still in the running.

I believe that is the most democratic system, and that election reform like this is vitally important for the future health of democracy at the national, state, and local levels.

Let's put this question to the voters on the November 2024 ballot: should Alameda adopt a ranked choice voting system for future elections?

Thank you for discussing these important reforms!

Best regards,

James Johnston

From: [Hilda Poulson](#)
To: [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [Malia Vella](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [City Clerk](#); [Tracy Jensen](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 7-D – election reform
Date: Friday, March 29, 2024 9:40:14 AM
Attachments: [Election reform letter.docx](#)

Dear Mayor and Council members, please find attached my submission regarding agenda item 7D.

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Hilda Poulson
(310) 251-9667

Meeting Date: April 2, 2024
Re: Agenda Item 7-D – election reform

Dear Mayor and Council members,
I support the adoption of the resolution pertaining to candidate statements.

I am not currently in support of moving to district elections. District elections can result in *uncontested elections* in a city our size. Other cities' experience finds that going from at-large elections to by-district will likely cause uncontested elections. For instance, after Visalia, with about the same number of regular voters as Alameda, created voting districts, they went from having no elections uncontested to two of every five. Competition and evaluating a marketplace of ideas are essential to a thriving democracy. Choosing the most skilled representatives is fundamental to the continuing success of the city. Transitioning to by-district elections would be a step backwards on both accounts.

Also, the districting process was extremely bitter in San Francisco and in other cities. With election integrity and gerrymandering being at the forefront everywhere, promoting a system that focuses on neighborhood, not citywide, interests can result in a fracturing and polarization of our city.

I AM staunchly in support of Alameda adopting ranked choice voting. As opposed to districting, RCV is a proven electoral reform that increases participation and civility from candidates and voters alike. It also ensures that the majority of voters pick the winners. I am heartened by the growing awareness of RCV's benefits the League of Women Voters achieved through its recent signature gathering effort.

Any electoral reform requires community outreach and education. Thus, community forums are necessary, and the public will need to understand the problem the city council is trying to solve.

Sincerely,

Hilda Poulson
Alameda, CA

From: [Kathryn Anderson](#)
To: [CityCouncil-List](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Election Reform Issues in Alameda
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2024 8:04:50 PM

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

I write as a voting member of the Alameda community, to express my concern about election reform issues. Between August of 2023 and February of this year, I spent hours at various locations in Alameda, explaining ranked choice voting (RCV) to Alameda voters and encouraging them to sign my petition to place it on the ballot this November. Having heard of results of RCV in Berkeley, Oakland and Albany, I am convinced this method of voting would be advantageous to our community.

I think election candidates should be required to achieve a majority, rather than a plurality, to be declared the winner. Ranked Choice Voting can achieve that goal, without the expense of a second run-off election. Furthermore, the RCV process makes it possible for voters to make their first choice the candidate they are most enthusiastic about, rather than the one they feel is the least offensive of likely winners. I don't like having to game the election, trying to decide if I am "wasting" my vote by voting for a candidate who is considered unlikely to win. With RCV, I can vote for the candidate I really like, and in second place vote for a compromise candidate, who will not get my vote unless my first choice candidate is eliminated due to placing last in the vote count.

My dozen hours on the streets of Alameda with a petition for RCV taught me that most people do not really understand how RCV works, and much of my time was spent explaining it. A few minutes are not enough to get a thorough explanation of the RCV process. However, understanding the basics about ranking candidates was convincing to many voters I spoke to. Most people were willing to give the process a chance on the ballot after they understood it better, and were happy to sign the petition.

The only reason the League of Women Voters, and volunteers like me, were unable to get the required number of signatures was that we were an entirely volunteer band of signature gatherers. We were enthusiastic and educated on our issue, but simply too small a group to get enough signatures without having our group working nearly full-time on the petitions. We often shared space outside grocery stores with paid signature gatherers for another initiative. I spoke to those gatherers every time I was asked to sign their petitions, and was not surprised to find that none of the gatherers knew anything about the elected official they were trying to recall. I find myself troubled by this example of corrupting power of money in politics, where deep pockets can provide the person power for an activity which ought to be driven by grass roots support, as our campaign was.

It seems to me that RCV also solves some of the problems that some people think should be solved by district elections for city council. The population of Alameda is small enough to be considered a single district. Indeed, in county and state elections, our entire city is combined with portions of other cities to comprise a "district." As a person who grew up in Alameda, I have not felt a strong connection to a "district" where I lived. Furthermore, district elections without RCV could result once again in candidates being elected with a plurality rather than a majority.

The League of Women Voters is a highly respected organization, which takes positions on electoral issues, and not on candidates, only after at least a year of study. I have great respect for the work they have done, and support their call for Ranked Choice Voting in Alameda.

Thank you for your attention to my letter.

Sincerely,
Kathryn L. Anderson

From: [paula.rainey](#)
To: [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [Tracy Jensen](#); [Malia Vella](#)
Cc: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Agenda Item 7-D – election reform
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2024 5:52:21 PM

Meeting Date: April 2, 2024

Re: Agenda Item 7-D – election reform

Dear Mayor and Council members,

I support the adoption of the resolution pertaining to candidate statements. The part dealing with election reforms is a bit murky. If the city council is to provide direction on election reform, the council should **first articulate what problem(s) you are trying to solve**. Otherwise, the exercise would be rudderless.

For example, what problem is the city council trying to solve by going to districts? Since Alameda already achieves racial diversity under our current system, the reason is unclear.

District elections can result in *uncontested elections* in a city our size. Other cities' experience finds that going from at-large elections to by-district will likely cause uncontested elections. For instance, after Visalia, with about the same number of regular voters as Alameda, created voting districts, they went from having no elections uncontested to two of every five. Competition and evaluating a marketplace of ideas are essential to a thriving democracy. Choosing the most skilled representatives is fundamental to the continuing success of the city. Transitioning to by-district elections would be a step backwards on both accounts.

Also, the districting process was extremely bitter in San Francisco and in other cities. With election integrity and gerrymandering being at the forefront everywhere, promoting a system that focuses on neighborhood, not citywide, interests can result in a fracturing and polarization of our city.

Ranked Choice Voting, on the other hand, is a proven electoral reform that increases participation and civility from candidates and voters alike. It also ensures that the majority of voters pick the winners. I am heartened by the growing awareness of RCV's benefits the League of Women Voters achieved through its recent signature gathering effort.

Any electoral reform requires community outreach and education. Thus, community forums are necessary, and the public will need to understand the problem the city council is trying to solve.

Sincerely,

Paula Rainey

Palace Court, Alameda CA

From: [ACT](#)
To: [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Malia Vella](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [Tracy Jensen](#)
Cc: [Manager Manager](#); [City Clerk](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] April 2 City council Agenda Item 7-D Election Reform _ Districts
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2024 10:49:04 AM

ACT

Alameda Citizens Task Force

Vigilance, Truth, Civility

Dear Mayor Ashcraft, Vice Mayor Daysog & Councilmembers Vella, Spenser & Jensen:

ACT was very surprised and pleased to read that city council is considering the pros and cons and possible adaption of a charter amendment to change Alameda's at large, city-wide elections, to district elections. This is something ACT has thought about and discussed for several years now. We've even paid speakers to come to our meetings and inform us about this matter.

It is our studied and informed belief that changing to district-wide elections would be a welcome change to Alameda. Studies across the nation show that district elections increase the number of candidates running, increase diversity of candidates, and reduce costs, as campaigns take place over a smaller geographic area that is easier and cheaper to canvas. District elections also increase and improve representation in local, geographically specific sections of the city. Areas, especially lower-income areas, have a much greater chance to have their interests represented, enhanced, and protected.

In addition, Candidates and representatives will be more accessible and responsive if they live closer to their constituents, and district elections will bring them closer to a wider swatch of the residents and electorate than at large elections.

Some cities balance district and at-large interests by having council members run by district and the mayor run at large. Another way to do it is to have the council members select the mayor from among themselves, or the council person with the greatest number of votes becomes mayor. There are lots of possibilities.

In an at-large election system, it is possible—and likely—that more than one candidate will come from the wealthier areas of the city and that poorer areas will have less or no representation from their areas. The same is true of newly developed areas. They are less likely to have representation than older, established parts of the city.

For all the above reasons, we urge you to put district elections on the agenda and to open discussions on this subject with serious consideration being given to place it on the ballot as an amendment to the charter.

Sincerely,

ACT Board of Directors

Comment on Agenda Item 7-D – regarding potential election reforms
April 2, 2024

Dear Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft and members of the council,

I am in support of providing direction to commence a public discussion and investigation of the pros and cons of potential changes to the voting method for city offices. As identified in the staff report, the two voting options are: (a) creating electoral voting districts, and (b) instituting Ranked Choice Voting

If a public process is set up to gather input and report recommendations, if any, back to the council, here are a few points worth considering:

- 1) **Districts will impose an equity handicap on renters.** Roughly half of Alameda households are renters. If a renter is elected to city office to represent the district they are living in, they are vulnerable, much more so than homeowners, to having to move through no fault of their own. A rent increases to an unsustainable level or a change of ownership requiring vacating the property would mean the officeholder would have to find new housing within only their district. Moving out of the district to a different part of town would forfeit the opportunity to run for reelection in the district they originally got elected in. And worst case, if the officeholder moves out of their district, they potentially face immediately having their seat declared vacant, depending on the elections code.
- 2) **Districts will lessen the influence of Asian voters.** It is not possible to draw a voting district in Alameda in which Asians are a majority, according to recent census data. Asian voters will be a minority in all possible districts. Therefore, as a protected voting group making up roughly 31 percent of Alameda's population, they would be *worse off* than under the present at-large voting system.
- 3) The voting reform that does not introduce the handicaps in points #1 and #2 above is Proportional Ranked Choice Voting.
- 4) In some cases, districts do correct for lack of diversity. As noted in the staff report, in Alameda, lack of diversity on the city council is not a problem in need of a solution, so there is no need to worry about litigation avoidance. **And districts, if anything, could make matters worse by lessening diversity.**
- 5) What is the goal? The electoral voting reform that would translate into better democracy is one that ensures city officeholders are required to receive a majority of votes cast to win. This can be accomplished through Ranked Choice Voting.

Thank you,
Richard Bangert
Alameda resident

From: [Paul Beusterien](#)
To: [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Malia Vella](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Tracy Jensen](#); [Trish Spencer](#)
Cc: [Lara Weisiger](#); [Jennifer Ott](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Council Agenda Item #7D - April 2, 2024
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 8:04:21 PM

Dear Mayor Ezzy-Ashcraft, Vice Mayor Daysog, Councilmember Herrera-Spencer, Councilmember Vella, and Councilmember Jensen,

I'm excited to see election reform agendized and would like to add a few updates to my attached February 26th letter:

I support capping the campaign materials publication cost, especially after having experienced the high costs as a council candidate.

Since the council's 2020 subcommittee, there is now much more data available about the value of various election reforms as numerous jurisdictions around the Bay Area and the country have made changes to improve the democratic process.

For example, it is becoming increasingly clear that proportional ranked choice voting has numerous advantages to districts for addressing CVRA concerns, election costs, and better representation.

I encourage the council to create a new subcommittee, along with community engagement, and take advantage of the League of Women Voters' offer to do more community outreach, to progress on improving elections and democracy in Alameda.

Paul Beusterien
paul.beusterien@gmail.com

On Mon, Feb 26, 2024 at 7:48 PM Paul Beusterien <paul.beusterien@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mayor Ezzy-Ashcraft, Vice Mayor Daysog, Councilmember Herrera-Spencer, Councilmember Vella, and Councilmember Jensen,

Thank you for listening to my public comments during the February 20, 2024 council meeting. Here's a written version of the comments, along with a bit more detail. Let me know if you'd like to follow up regarding RCV in Alameda.

Background

The momentum for [Ranked Choice Voting](#) (RCV) has been accelerating across the United States in recent years. Especially after the 2016 and 2020 elections, Americans are increasingly interested in strengthening our democracy. RCV [ensures that a majority](#) of voters get represented in each election and is thus a solid, incremental way to make democracy more effective.

[Alaska](#) and [Maine](#) have adopted RCV. [Oregon](#) is voting on it this year. [Nearby](#), San Francisco, Oakland, San Leandro, and Albany use RCV. [Barbara Lee is a strong supporter](#). Santa Clara County is voting on it this year. The California State Democratic party supports RCV and the Alameda County Democratic Party recently voted to oppose any RCV repeal initiatives.

“Despite claims that RCV might be challenging for voters, data shows that voters in ranked-choice elections – across all ethnic groups – overwhelmingly find it simple to use,” states this [report](#) from Minnesota FairVote. RCV has been in use in Minneapolis and four other Minnesota cities for over a decade.

Alameda Ballot Initiative

For the last several months, I’ve been working with the [League of Women Voters](#) to inform voters about RCV and collect the ~10,000 signatures needed to create a citizen-driven ballot initiative. In the process, we talked to thousands of Alamedans. After learning about RCV, almost all of them signed the petition.

Unfortunately, with only volunteer signature gatherers, we fell short of connecting in person with enough voters to reach the threshold. However, it was encouraging to see how excited everyone was to support RCV after learning about it.

Misconceptions

The [League’s website](#) addresses several misconceptions about RCV. I’d like to address three additional ones here:

- “RCV elects bad representatives”: Any voting system does not guarantee effective leadership. An elected official’s performance in office is unrelated to how they were elected. RCV is about ensuring that the majority of citizens are represented in each election. In a democracy, it’s likely that everyone will be in the minority at some point.
- “I got elected, so the current system is fine”: Many elected officials are hesitant to support RCV because they didn’t need it to get elected. If that’s your opinion, I encourage you to dig deeper. [RCV incentivizes elected official collaboration](#) to achieve progress favorable to the majority.
- “District elections will solve poor representation”: Candidates may still get elected without majority support and uncontested elections are more likely to

occur.

Call to Action

While the signature gathering effort failed to reach its goals, the council can still honor the wishes of thousands of Alamedans and put RCV on the 2024 ballot. Modernizing to RCV is aligned with the Council's Equitable and Inclusive governance priority of the city's current [Strategic Plan](#).

When the 2020 Albany RCV initiative failed to collect their threshold of just hundreds of signatures, the council still put it on the ballot, despite not supporting it themselves. The ballot initiative passed with [73% of the vote and has been working well since](#).

I've been proud to see Alameda leading the way for other cities across many domains. I encourage you to give Alameda citizens the opportunity to improve democracy and put RCV on the ballot this November.

Please reach out to me if you'd like to partner on moving RCV forward in Alameda.

Paul Beusterien

paul.beusterien@gmail.com

650-918-7074

From: acrane@comcast.net on behalf of President@lwvalameda.org
To: [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Malia Vella](#); [Tracy Jensen](#); [City Clerk](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments re: April 2 Agenda Item 7-D - Resolution Adopting Regulations for Candidate Statements and electoral reforms
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 9:47:33 AM
Attachments: [Letter to Council -- candidate statements and electoral reforms.docx](#)

I am attaching comments from the League of Women Voters of Alameda regarding item 7-D on the agenda for the April 2 City Council meeting. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Anna Crane,

President, League of Women Voters of Alameda
510-521-7352
president@lwvalameda.org



Mayor Ashcraft, Vice Mayor Daysog and Council Members Jensen, Herrera Spencer and Vella

Re: Agenda item 7-D -- Resolution Adopting Regulations for Candidates for Elective Office Pertaining to Candidate Statements and Electoral Reforms

The League strongly supports the proposed changes to the regulations for candidate statements. Our reviews of campaign spending show that, for many candidates, the cost of candidate statements is the largest expense that the candidate incurs.

Candidates with limited personal funds who are supported only by small donors have difficulty raising sufficient funds for the statements, which are an effective means for candidates to reach the public with their message. This in turn limits their ability to expand their network of small donors to further disseminate their views.

The proposed change is well-targeted to increase candidate participation. The requirement for candidates to pay up to \$1000 for the cost of statements is a reasonable control to restrict the benefit to serious candidates.

The League of Women Voters of Alameda is in strong support of the City's continuing effort to consider electoral reforms with public input, as discussed in this agenda item.

In 2019 the League worked with a subcommittee of the City Council to hold public meetings for potential amendments to the City Charter. The Council acted on 3 measures for which they found clear support, deferring action on the remaining issues. We propose a similar approach for the electoral reform issues under consideration by the Council tonight: district elections, ranked choice voting and increasing the size of the City Council. The League would assist in gathering public input by presenting pros and cons for the 3 issues and holding workshops for discussion among members of the public which the Council could consider in deciding on measures to bring to the voters. We agree that these issues are complicated and require careful consideration. We look forward to working with the council on electoral reform.

Anna Crane

Anna Crane, President
League of Women Voters of Alameda
510-521-7352