



Legislation Text

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CITY of ALBUQUERQUE
TWENTY SIXTH COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. O-24-26 ENACTMENT NO. _____

SPONSORED BY: Nichole Rogers and Tammy Fiebelkorn

ORDINANCE

Adopting A Ranked Choice Voting System, Repealing And Replacing Article II, Sections 7 And 8 Of The City Charter, And Directing The City Clerk To Develop Educational Materials (Rogers and Fiebelkorn)

WHEREAS, The City of Albuquerque City Charter includes an election provision requiring elected office holders to receive at least 50% of the total number of votes cast for their respective office in order to be elected, stating: "Those persons who are candidates for Mayor or Councilor and receive the largest number of votes cast for the office in question are elected, provided the number of votes equals or exceeds 50% of the total number of votes cast for the office."; and

WHEREAS, At present, if not candidate for office meets the 50% threshold required by the Charter, a runoff election must be held within 45 days where the two candidates with the highest number of votes cat are placed on the ballot; and

WHEREAS, Since the runoff provisions have been in place, the City has been required to hold five runoff elections, including:

- **A City Council runoff election in 2013 (which included a city-wide election in order to also accommodate a ballot initiative), which cost the City \$667,045;**
- **A Mayoral runoff election in 2017, which cost the City \$840,890;**
- **A City Council runoff election in 2019, which cost the City \$368,675;**
- **Two City Council runoff elections in 2021, which cost the City \$610,424; and**
- **A City Council runoff election in 2023, which cost the City \$500,000; and**

WHEREAS, A ranked choice voting system, also commonly referred to as an “instant runoff” would help eliminate costly separate runoff elections in the City, and avoid holding a runoff in the middle of the winter holiday season for candidates, elected officials, voters; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to the City’s current post-election runoff system, a ranked choice voting system would provide voters the opportunity to rank candidates by preference on their ballots during regular local elections; and

WHEREAS, Runoff elections often suffer from significantly lower turnout compared to the initial election. Adopting a ranked choice voting system and allowing voters to express their preferences for multiple candidates in the initial election could lead to higher overall voter participation in elections; and

WHEREAS, Ranked choice voting and “instant runoffs” are another tool, similar to early voting, expanded voting hours, and mail-in and absentee voting that can be used to accommodate various barriers to voter participation, including but not limited to, work commitments, childcare responsibilities, and transportation issues; and

WHEREAS, An education campaign administered by Clerk’s Office will inform the public about the transition to ranked choice voting, explain how the system functions, and encourage voter participation; and

WHEREAS, In New Mexico, both Santa Fe and Las Cruces use ranked choice voting in their local elections, and it has been adopted in additional 60+ jurisdictions nationwide; and

WHEREAS, State Law allows municipalities to amend their Charter by ordinance to allow for a ranked-choice runoff election. NMSA 1978, §1-22-16.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL, THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE:

SECTION 1. Article II, Sections 7 and 8 of the City Charter are hereby repealed and replaced with the following:

“[Section 7. RANKED CHOICE VOTING

(a) Pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section 1-22-16, the City of Albuquerque adopts a ranked-choice runoff election to allow voters participating in the regular local election to rank the candidates for Mayor and City Council in the order of preference for the voter.

(b) The City will begin using ranked-choice voting with the regular local election held

in November of 2025 and will continue to do so in all subsequent elections.

(c) A ranked-choice runoff election shall be conducted on the same ballot as the regular local election to allow the voter to rank the candidates for office in the voter's preferred order.

(d) The City will adhere to and comply with the rules governing ranked-choice runoff elections issued by the New Mexico Secretary of State.]”

SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY. If any section, paragraph, sentence, clause, word or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions of this Ordinance. The Council hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and each section, paragraph, sentence, clause, word or phrase thereof irrespective of any provision being declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid.

SECTION 3. COMPILATION. SECTION 1 of this Ordinance shall amend, be incorporated in, and be made part of the City Charter of the City of Albuquerque.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance takes effect five (5) days after publication by title and general summary.