

CITY of ALBUQUERQUE

TWENTY SEVENTH COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. O-26-13 ENACTMENT NO. _____

SPONSORED BY: Nichole Rogers, Tammy Fiebelkorn, Stephanie Telles

1 ORDINANCE

2 ADOPTING A RANKED CHOICE VOTING SYSTEM, REPEALING AND
3 REPLACING ARTICLE II, SECTIONS 7 AND 8 OF THE CITY CHARTER, AND
4 DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS.

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

12 WHEREAS, At present, if no candidate for office meets the 50% threshold
13 required by the Charter, a runoff election must be held within 45 days where
14 the two candidates with the highest number of votes cat are placed on the
15 ballot; and

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

- 18 • A City Council runoff election in 2013 (which included a city-wide
19 election in order to also accommodate a ballot initiative), which cost
20 the City \$667,045;
- 21 • A Mayoral runoff election in 2017, which cost the City \$840,890;
- 22 • A City Council runoff election in 2019, which cost the City \$368,675;
- 23 • Two City Council runoff elections in 2021, which cost the City
24 \$610,424; and
- 25 • A City Council runoff election in 2023, which cost the City \$500,000;
26 and

- 1 • One City Council runoff election and a Mayoral runoff election in
2 2025, which the County estimated would cost \$1.6 million.

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

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

10 WHEREAS, Runoff elections often suffer from significantly lower turnout
11 compared to the initial election. For example, the 2025 Albuquerque Mayoral
12 runoff election saw 5,191 fewer voters than the general election; and

13 WHEREAS, Adopting a ranked choice voting system and allowing voters to
14 express their preferences for multiple candidates in the initial election could
15 lead to higher overall voter participation in elections; and

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

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

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

27 WHEREAS, State Law allows municipalities to amend their Charter by
28 ordinance to allow for a ranked-choice runoff election. NMSA 1978, § 1-22-16.
29 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL, THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF
30 ALBUQUERQUE:

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

33 “Section 7. RANKED CHOICE VOTING

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

5 (b) The City will begin using ranked-choice voting with the regular local
6 election held in November of 2027 and will continue to do so in all subsequent
7 elections.

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

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

13 SECTION 2. The City Clerk is directed to develop and administer an
14 educational campaign that will inform the public about the City's transition to
15 Ranked Choice Voting, explain how the system functions, and encourage
16 voter understanding and participation. The City Clerk is encouraged to
17 collaborate with other jurisdictions that have adopted RCV, including, but not
18 limited to, Santa Fe and Las Cruces.

19 SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY. If any section, paragraph, sentence, clause,
20 word or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or
21 unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not
22 affect the validity of the remaining provisions of this Ordinance. The Council
23 hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and each section,
24 paragraph, sentence, clause, word or phrase thereof irrespective of any
25 provision being declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid.

26 SECTION 4. COMPILATION. SECTION 1 of this Ordinance shall amend, be
27 incorporated in, and be made part of the City Charter of the City of
28 Albuquerque.

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

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