Context: I created this document in order to try to share everything that I think is important about STAR Voting and RCV, starting with the basic information at the top. In the "Criticisms and Counterpoints" section, I attempted to outline the basic arguments against each method, and counterpoints to each argument (if I knew what they were). I am approaching this from the perspective of someone who prefers STAR Voting and has concerns with RCV, but I'm open to other perspectives, and I'm sure there are points I missed. If you would like to link to additional resources or counterpoints, please send them to Kali to share with the subcommittee.
–Annie Kallen

STAR Voting and Ranked Choice Voting Basics

Table of Contents:

Note: Throughout this document, the term Ranked Choice Voting is used to refer to its single-winner version (aka Instant Runoff Voting) unless otherwise indicated.
Both Ranked Choice Voting and STAR Voting also have simple multi-winner options, as well as proportional multi-winner options.

How do they work?

STAR:
- Video: How does STAR voting work?
- About STAR Voting

- [Make your own STAR poll](#)

RCV:
- [Video: How does ranked choice voting work?](#)
- [Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center: How it Works](#)
- [Make your own RCV poll](#)

History

STAR:
Invented in 2014 at a conference of the Equal Vote Coalition in Eugene, Oregon. The main two camps of voting method advocates ("scoring" supporters and "ranked" supporters) had different reasons for preferring their family of methods. STAR was created to take the best characteristics of Score Voting and Instant Runoff Voting and put them together.

RCV:
Invented in 1870 as a way to simplify the tallying of prior ranked methods. Prior methods had used Condorcet Voting (finding which candidate would beat all others head-to-head using a ranked ballot), but with Instant Runoff Voting (Ranked Choice Voting) you can easily count ranked ballots by hand.

Where have they been used?

STAR:
Democratic Party of Oregon - presidential delegates
Multnomah County Democrats - internal elections
Independent Party of Oregon - 2020 primary
Movement for a People's Party (New Jersey and New York)
Portland Neighbors Welcome
Libertarian Party of Oregon (not yet ratified)
Other nonprofits and organizations

RCV:
Australia House of Representatives (single-winner RCV)
Australia Senate (proportional RCV aka STV)

Ireland (proportional RCV aka STV)
Maine
Alaska
New York, NY
San Francisco, CA
The Academy Awards
Other municipalities, nonprofits, and organizations

Portland Charter Review resources

The Form of Voting subcommittee recommended STAR Voting (with one person in that subcommittee recommending RCV).

[Video of STAR vs. RCV Q&A with "Form of Voting" subcommittee](#)
[Written responses to Portland Charter Q&A from Equal Vote](#)
(Does Oregon RCV have written responses available anywhere that we could review?)

Criticisms and Counterpoints

STAR:

- **Criticism: STAR is complicated.**
  Counterpoint: [STAR is simpler than RCV](#) on every metric.

- **Criticism: STAR hasn't been used widely.**
  Counterpoint: While STAR hasn't been used in municipal elections yet, it has been successfully used for several years in parties and organizations. Oregon has an opportunity to lead in this reform, as we have with vote-by-mail, motor-voter registration, and even the ballot initiative itself.

- **Criticism: STAR fails the ["Later-no-Harm" criterion](#).** In other words, adding support for additional candidates could adversely affect a first-choice candidate.
  Counterpoint: No voting method can pass all criteria (this has been mathematically proven), so [it doesn't make sense to call out a specific criterion in a pass/ fail kind of way](#). Rather, voting methods should be measured by how

often they pass criteria, and how well. In STAR, the adverse effects of "Later-no-Harm" are rare and minimal.

It should be noted that the "Later-no-Harm" criterion is mutually exclusive with the "Favorite Betrayal" criterion (see RCV criticisms below). Both Plurality Voting and RCV fail "Favorite Betrayal," which is why they both have a spoiler effect.

- **Criticism: STAR can fail to find the majority winner.**
  Counterpoint: It's impossible to guarantee a majority winner in any voting method (since a majority may not exist, or there might be multiple majorities). That being said, STAR finds the majority winner in the final round among voters who indicated a preference. In contrast, RCV fails to find a majority winner the majority of the time in elections that proceed beyond the first round (see RCV criticisms below).

- **Criticism: STAR encourages bullet voting** (marking only 0s and 5s).
  Counterpoint: While plain Score Voting (not to be confused with STAR Voting) incentivizes bullet voting to a certain extent, the automatic runoff in STAR incentivizes voters to mark their true preferences. In any case, bullet voting also occurs in RCV whenever voters only rank one candidate, which can lead to higher rates of exhausted ballots (see exhausted ballots in RCV Criticisms below).

- **Criticism: Not everyone will use the full range.**
  Counterpoint: The instructions state to mark your favorite with a 5, your least favorite with a 0, and the others in order and strength of preference. But even if voters don't use the full range, their preference will still be counted between the two finalists. Contrast this with RCV, where voters who don't (or can't) rank all candidates may have their ballot thrown out before the final round (see exhausted ballots in RCV Criticisms below).

Reports Containing Criticism of STAR:

FairVote:
Explaining FairVote's Position on STAR Voting
Rebuttals to FairVote piece:
FairVote is Making a Mistake
Our take on FairVote's position regarding STAR Voting

League of Women Voters:

RCV and STAR Comparison - League of Women Voters - 2019
RCV and STAR Comparison - League of Women Voters - 2021
Rebuttal to LWV pieces:
Refuting League of Women Voters Piece

RCV:

- **Criticism: RCV has exhausted ballots**, ballots which are not counted in the final round when voters don't (or can't) rank all the candidates. This disproportionately affects African Americans, Latinos, voters with less education, and those whose first language is not English.
  Counterpoint: Exhausted ballots in RCV are no worse than wasted votes in Plurality Voting.

- **Criticism: RCV has high rates of spoiled ballots**, ballots which are thrown out due to being incorrectly completed. These appear to be more likely to occur in communities of color and low-income communities.
  Counterpoint: Ranking is easy - A response to misleading claims about voter errors

- **Criticism: RCV is complicated**

- **Criticism: RCV fails the "Favorite Betrayal" criterion.** In other words, if you rank your favorite candidate first, it could help a lesser-preferred candidate to win. Because of this, RCV has a spoiler effect. Increasing support for a candidate could hurt that candidate in 15% or more of competitive elections.
  Counterpoint: No voting method can pass all criteria (this has been mathematically proven).

- **Criticism: RCV is not precinct summable.** In other words, RCV ballots or ballot data must be centrally tabulated. This has impacts on transparency, auditability, and security. Additionally, it may mean that it is not legal in places like Portland, which spans three counties. (Oregon law requires counties to process their own ballots.)
  Counterpoint: It is more important to audit individual ballots. Another option is to re-run the election from scratch.

- **Criticism: [RCV fails to find a majority winner the majority of the time](#)** when additional rounds of tabulation are necessary. This is because RCV does not count all ballots in the final round.
  Counterpoint: [RCV finds a majority of ballots that make it to the final round](#), and if we assume that any exhausted ballots were due to voters choosing not to rank the finalists (rather than running out of allowable rankings), then RCV finds a majority among voters who indicated a preference in that round.

- **Criticism: RCV is not transparent.** It is [difficult to present the results in such a way that displays the relative support each candidate received.](#) It is also impossible to present precinct-level results in any meaningful way.

Reports containing criticism of RCV:

Alaska Policy Forum:
[Report: The Failed Experiment of Ranked Choice Voting](#)

Fair Vote Canada*:
[Out of the Frying Pan Into the Fire: Lessons on Ranked Ballot from Australia](#)
*Note: Fair Vote Canada is not affiliated with FairVote (U.S.). Both organizations advocate for STV, but Fair Vote Canada is opposed to single-winner RCV (which they call Alternative Vote).

Maine Policy Institute:
[False Majority: The Failed Experiment of Ranked Choice Voting](#)
Rebuttal: [Promoting majority rule: A response to concerns about "exhausted ballots"](#)

Lindsey Cormack:
[Cataloging the Promises of RCV in New York City](#)

Studies comparing RCV and STAR

These simulations have found STAR Voting to outperform RCV (aka IRV) in terms of selecting the winner most representative of the voters' true wishes:

[Voter Satisfaction Efficiency](#)
[Strategic Voter Simulations](#)
[Animated Yee Diagrams](#)

Proportional Representation

Both RCV and STAR have proportional representation tabulation options. These can be used for multi-winner elections but not single-winner elections.

Proportional STAR
Proportional RCV (aka Single Transferable Vote)

Voting Method Discussion Forums

Places online where people debate/ discuss the merits of different voting methods:
Voting Theory Forum
End FPTP Reddit Forum

Voting Method Terminology

STAR Voting:
Stands for "Score Then Automatic Runoff" and is a hybrid between Score Voting and Instant Runoff Voting

Proportional STAR:
Also known as *STAR-PR* or *Allocated Score*, this is a proportional version of STAR. There are also other ways to tabulate a scored ballot proportionally.

Ranked Choice Voting:
- Single-winner form is known as *Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)* in academic circles
- Known as *Ranked Choice Voting* in the U.S. This can refer to either the single-winner or multi-winner versions.
- Known as *Alternative Vote* or *Preferential Voting* in other countries

Single Transferable Vote (STV):
A proportional version of Ranked Choice Voting. There are also other ways to tabulate a ranked ballot proportionally.

Other methods:

Approval voting:
Same as a Plurality ballot, but mark all candidates you approve of

Condorcet voting:
Starting with a ranked ballot, find the candidate who would beat all others head-to-head.

Plurality voting:
Our current choose-one-only voting method. Also known as *First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)*

Score Voting:
Also known as *Range Voting*