



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 675

January Session, 2025

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1536

Senate, April 14, 2025

The Committee on Government Administration and Elections reported through SEN. FLEXER of the 29th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RANKED-CHOICE VOTING IN PARTY CAUCUSES, CONVENTIONS AND PRIMARIES, INCLUDING PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARIES, AND IN CERTAIN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective January 1, 2027*) (a) As used in this section:
- 2 (1) "Active candidate" means, with respect to a round of tabulation
- 3 under ranked-choice voting, a candidate (A) whose name appears on
- 4 the ballot or who is registered as a write-in candidate, and (B) who has
- 5 not been eliminated, is not a winning candidate and is not a withdrawn
- 6 candidate;
- 7 (2) "Inactive ballot" means, with respect to a given round of tabulation
- 8 and all subsequent rounds of tabulation under ranked-choice voting, a
- 9 ballot on which no vote is tabulated because (A) no candidate ranked on
- 10 the ballot remains an active candidate; or (B) two or more candidates are
- 11 ranked at the same order of preference and no other candidates that are

12 ranked higher remain as active candidates;

13 (3) "Ranked-choice voting" means a system of casting and tabulating
14 votes under which, with respect to a particular office, (A) each elector is
15 able to rank candidates on the ballot in the order of such elector's
16 preference, (B) one or more rounds of tabulation are used to determine
17 active candidates in accordance with electors' preferences, and (C) the
18 active candidate with the greatest number of votes after all rounds of
19 tabulation are complete is the winning candidate;

20 (4) "Rank" or "ranking" means an elector's vote expressed in
21 numerical order of such elector's preferences as to the candidates on the
22 ballot, where "1" indicates the highest preference and subsequent
23 numbers indicate lower preferences;

24 (5) "Repeated ranking" means markings on a ballot whereby the same
25 candidate is ranked at multiple, differing orders of preference;

26 (6) "Skipped ranking" means markings on a ballot whereby an elector
27 leaves a ranking unassigned but also ranks a candidate at a lower order
28 of preference;

29 (7) "Undervote" means, with respect to all rounds of tabulation under
30 ranked-choice voting for a particular office, a ballot on which no vote is
31 cast due to no candidate being ranked;

32 (8) "Winning candidate" means the candidate with the greatest
33 number of votes, under ranked-choice voting, after all rounds of
34 tabulation are complete; and

35 (9) "Withdrawn candidate" means a person (A) whose candidacy has
36 been withdrawn in accordance with the applicable provision of title 9 of
37 the general statutes, and (B) in a presidential preference primary, who
38 complies with all applicable party rules governing the timing,
39 procedures or substance of candidate withdrawals or campaign
40 suspensions.

41 (b) (1) Except as prohibited by any provision of title 9 of the general

42 statutes, the outcome of (A) any primary, other than a presidential
43 preference primary, held on or after January 1, 2027, (B) any municipal
44 election held on or after January 1, 2027, or (C) any presidential
45 preference primary held on or after January 1, 2028, may be determined
46 under ranked-choice voting.

47 (2) (A) For any primary or municipal election determined under
48 ranked-choice voting for an office to which electors nominate or elect no
49 more than one candidate, the provisions of subdivision (1) of subsection
50 (d) of this section shall apply.

51 (B) For any primary or municipal election determined under ranked-
52 choice voting for offices other than those described in subparagraph (A)
53 of this subdivision, the provisions of subdivision (1) of subsection (d) of
54 this section shall not apply.

55 (c) (1) (A) At each primary or municipal election conducted under
56 ranked-choice voting, the Secretary of the State shall prescribe the type
57 of ballot to be used, the instructions to appear on such ballot and the
58 layout and orientation of such ballot. The use of any ballot at any such
59 primary or municipal election shall be subject to the approval of the
60 Secretary.

61 (B) The ballot at each primary or municipal election conducted under
62 ranked-choice voting, or the portion of such ballot used for ranked-
63 choice voting, shall:

64 (i) List all candidates duly qualified to appear on such ballot for such
65 primary or municipal election and in such a manner as to allow each
66 elector who is eligible to vote in such primary or municipal election to
67 rank all such candidates in the order of such elector's preference. If such
68 ballot cannot allow for ranking of all such candidates, the Secretary may
69 limit ranking to not less than five candidates, provided such limitation
70 by the Secretary shall be uniform with respect to all electors eligible to
71 vote in such primary or municipal election;

72 (ii) For any primary, list and identify candidates in the order and

73 manner provided in subsections (a) to (c), inclusive, and (g) of section 9-
74 437 of the general statutes, at a minimum; and

75 (iii) For any municipal election, and for the purposes of sections 9-
76 249a, 9-372, 9-373b, 9-380, 9-453d and 9-453t of the general statutes,
77 indicate the party under which designation each candidate appears so
78 as to enable the elector to specify the party designation of the candidate
79 being ranked.

80 (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 9-242 of the general
81 statutes, at each primary or municipal election conducted under ranked-
82 choice voting, the voting tabulator shall be so constructed as to comply
83 with the provisions of this section.

84 (d) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, at each
85 primary or municipal election for an office to which electors nominate
86 or elect no more than one candidate, and conducted under ranked-
87 choice voting, each ballot shall be tabulated as one vote cast for the
88 highest-ranked active candidate on such ballot and tabulation shall
89 proceed in sequential rounds such that:

90 (A) In a round with three or more active candidates, the candidate
91 with the least number of votes at the completion of tabulation shall be
92 eliminated, the vote for such eliminated candidate shall be transferred
93 to a remaining active candidate in accordance with the ranked
94 preference expressed on such ballot and all remaining active candidates
95 shall advance to the next round; and

96 (B) In a round with fewer than three active candidates, the candidate
97 with the greatest number of votes at the completion of tabulation shall
98 be declared the winning candidate and no further rounds shall be
99 required.

100 (2) (A) If at the completion of tabulation a tie occurs between
101 candidates with the least number of votes and tabulation is unable to
102 proceed until such tie is resolved, the candidate to be eliminated shall
103 be determined by lot in accordance with regulations adopted under

104 subsection (f) of this section.

105 (B) If at the completion of tabulation a tie occurs between candidates
106 with the greatest number of votes, such tie shall be resolved in
107 accordance with the provisions of (i) section 9-446 of the general statutes
108 in the case of a primary other than a presidential preference primary, (ii)
109 section 9-332 of the general statutes in the case of a municipal election,
110 or (iii) chapter 154 of the general statutes in the case of a presidential
111 preference primary.

112 (C) (i) If a ballot is an inactive ballot with respect to any round, no
113 vote shall be tabulated on such ballot for such round.

114 (ii) If a ballot is an undervote, no vote shall be tabulated on such ballot
115 for all rounds.

116 (iii) If a ballot contains any repeated ranking or skipped ranking with
117 respect to any round, the vote shall be tabulated on such ballot for the
118 highest-ranked active candidate.

119 (e) For any primary or municipal election conducted under ranked-
120 choice voting, the provisions of section 9-445 or 9-311a of the general
121 statutes, as applicable, shall apply to the difference between the vote for
122 the winning candidate over the vote for the active candidate having the
123 next highest number of votes.

124 (f) The Secretary of the State shall adopt regulations, in accordance
125 with the provisions of chapter 54 of the general statutes, to implement
126 the provisions of this section.

127 Sec. 2. Section 9-173 of the general statutes is repealed and the
128 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2027*):

129 (a) In the election for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the
130 State, Treasurer, Comptroller and Attorney General, the person
131 receiving the greatest number of votes for each of said offices,
132 respectively, shall be declared elected. If no person has a plurality of the
133 votes for any of said offices, the General Assembly shall choose such

134 officer.

135 (b) In the election for senator in Congress, the person receiving the
136 greatest number of votes for such office shall be declared elected; but, if
137 no person has a plurality of the votes for said office, the Governor may
138 make a temporary appointment of a senator in Congress to serve for the
139 ensuing two years unless the General Assembly directs a special election
140 for a senator in Congress, to be held during said period, to fill the
141 vacancy occasioned by such failure to elect.

142 (c) In all elections of representatives in Congress, state senators, state
143 representatives and judges of probate, the person having the greatest
144 number of votes shall be declared elected. [Unless otherwise]

145 (d) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection or by
146 other law, in all municipal elections a plurality of the votes cast shall be
147 sufficient to elect.

148 (2) A municipality may, by charter or ordinance, (A) adopt ranked-
149 choice voting, as defined in section 1 of this act, for the conduct of any
150 municipal election held on or after January 1, 2027, for any office to
151 which electors elect no more than one candidate, and (B) implement
152 ranked-choice voting procedures, as provided in section 1 of this act, at
153 such election.

154 Sec. 3. (NEW) *(Effective January 1, 2027)* (a) As used in this section,
155 "state office" and "district office" have the same meanings as provided
156 in section 9-372 of the general statutes.

157 (b) At any political party convention held for the endorsement of any
158 candidate for nomination to state or district office or the office of state
159 senator or state representative, if such political party has adopted
160 ranked-choice voting, as defined in section 1 of this act, pursuant to its
161 party rules, for the purpose of making such endorsement, as between
162 three or more candidates, to which the delegates at such convention
163 endorse no more than one such candidate:

164 (1) The call of a roll and the recording of the vote of each delegate

165 entitled to vote and voting shall not be required; and

166 (2) The determination of the per cent of the votes of the convention
167 delegates present and voting on any roll-call vote, as described in
168 section 9-386 of the general statutes, and of any similar reference to the
169 per cent of such votes, including in sections 9-400 and 9-706 of the
170 general statutes, shall be the number of votes received in any round of
171 tabulation by each active candidate, as defined in section 1 of this act, in
172 the round as a percentage of the votes received by all active candidates
173 in the round.

174 (c) In all such proceedings for the making of an endorsement for
175 nomination to a state or district office, the clerk or secretary of such
176 convention shall keep a true record, in writing, of the number of votes
177 received by each active candidate in each round of tabulation and of the
178 round-by-round totals and shall, at the conclusion of the voting and
179 tabulation process, announce the round-by-round and final results.
180 Such clerk or secretary shall file such record at the headquarters of the
181 state central committee, where it shall be preserved for a period of one
182 hundred eighty days after the adjournment of such convention, and
183 such record shall be open to public inspection at all reasonable times.

184 Sec. 4. Section 9-444 of the general statutes is repealed and the
185 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2027*):

186 (a) (1) In the case of a primary for state or district office, each person
187 certified by the Secretary of the State as provided in section 9-440, to
188 have received the greatest number of votes of the electors eligible to vote
189 in a primary for any office shall be deemed to have been chosen as the
190 nominee of such party to such office.

191 (2) In the case of a primary for a municipal office, the moderator, or
192 the head moderator, as the case may be, shall declare nominated the
193 person having the greatest number of votes for such office and, if more
194 than one person is to be nominated for the same office, he shall declare
195 nominated the persons having the greatest number of votes for such
196 office up to the number to be chosen.

197 ~~(3)~~ In the case of a primary for members of a town committee, such
198 moderator shall declare elected the persons having the greatest number
199 of votes for such positions up to the number to be chosen for such
200 positions.

201 ~~(4)~~ In the case of a primary for justice of the peace, such moderator
202 shall declare elected each person on the slate having the greatest number
203 of votes for such offices. [In]

204 ~~(b) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, in all~~
205 ~~primaries, a plurality of the votes cast shall be sufficient to nominate or~~
206 ~~elect, as the case may be.~~

207 ~~(2) A major party may, pursuant to its party rules, (A) adopt ranked-~~
208 ~~choice voting, as defined in section 1 of this act, for the conduct of any~~
209 ~~primary held on or after January 1, 2027, for any office to which electors~~
210 ~~nominate no more than one candidate, and (B) implement ranked-~~
211 ~~choice voting procedures, as provided in section 1 of this act, at such~~
212 ~~primary. The chairperson or authorized representative of any such~~
213 ~~party shall provide notice to the Secretary of the State, or the Secretary's~~
214 ~~designee, of such party's adoption in accordance with a process and~~
215 ~~timeline established by the Secretary for the provision of such notice.~~

216 Sec. 5. Section 9-473 of the general statutes is repealed and the
217 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2027*):

218 ~~(a) The secretary shall establish a process and deadline for the~~
219 ~~certification, by the chairman of each party to the secretary, of the~~
220 ~~number of delegates to which such party is entitled.~~

221 ~~(b) Not later than the [fourteenth day before the day of the primary]~~
222 ~~deadline established by the secretary pursuant to subsection (a) of this~~
223 ~~section, the chairman of each party shall certify in writing to the~~
224 ~~secretary the number of delegates to which such party is entitled~~
225 ~~pursuant to its rules. If such rules provide that such delegates are to be~~
226 ~~chosen from districts, the chairman shall also certify the number of~~
227 ~~delegates allocated to each district and the number to be selected at~~

228 large, if any. Such rules (1) may [(1)] provide for ranked-choice voting,
229 as defined in section 1 of this act, at any presidential preference primary
230 held on or after January 1, 2028, and (2) may (A) prescribe a formula for
231 the allocation of delegates to candidates based upon the percentages of
232 the total votes cast for, or received in any round of tabulation under
233 ranked-choice voting by, such candidates at the primary, or [(2)] (B)
234 require that all delegates shall be allocated to the candidate [receiving]
235 for whom the greatest number of votes were cast, or by whom the
236 greatest number of votes were received in any round of tabulation
237 under ranked-choice voting, notwithstanding such candidate's
238 percentage of the total votes cast for all candidates. If such rules
239 prescribe a formula for the allocation of delegates to candidates based
240 upon the percentages of the total votes cast for, or received in any round
241 of tabulation under ranked-choice voting by, such candidates at the
242 primary, the chairman shall also certify such formula and all
243 information necessary for the application of such formula to the results
244 of the primary.

245 (c) The chairman of a party shall furnish to the secretary, upon
246 request, a written interpretation or explanation of any ranked-choice
247 voting provided for by such party's rules, or any application of [such] a
248 delegate allocation formula prescribed, under subsection (b) of this
249 section.

250 Sec. 6. Section 9-476 of the general statutes is repealed and the
251 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2027*):

252 (a) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter or required for the
253 purposes of implementing ranked-choice voting, as defined in section 1
254 of this act, the provisions of chapter 145 and chapter 153 concerning
255 absentee voting at primaries, conduct of primaries and return and
256 tabulation of the vote at such primaries shall apply as nearly as
257 practicable and in the manner prescribed by the Secretary of the State,
258 to a presidential preference primary.

259 (b) On and after January 1, 2028, if a party's rules so provide pursuant
260 to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 9-473, as amended by this

261 act, each presidential preference primary shall be conducted under
262 ranked-choice voting. The secretary shall issue written instructions for
263 the implementation of policies and procedures regarding tabulation and
264 publication of preliminary and final results, including round-by-round
265 results. Such instructions shall provide that if a candidate withdraws as
266 of the day of the primary in accordance with applicable law, any ballot
267 cast prior to the day of the primary on which such candidate was the
268 highest-ranked candidate shall be counted as a vote for the next highest-
269 ranked candidate on such ballot. Such instructions shall take into
270 account any procedures requested in writing by the chairman of the
271 party holding such primary, which procedures are reasonable,
272 compatible with the use of ranked-choice voting ballots and capable of
273 being implemented using existing voting tabulators, including any
274 associated hardware and software. The secretary shall post all such
275 written instructions on the Internet web site of the office of the Secretary
276 of the State.

277 (c) The primary officials of each party for each polling place shall be
278 as specified in section 9-436, except that (1) the appointment of assistant
279 registrars of voters and absentee ballot counters shall be permitted but
280 not required, (2) the minimum number of official checkers shall be one,
281 (3) the minimum number of voting tabulator tenders shall be one for
282 each two voting tabulators in use, (4) if two parties are holding
283 primaries and the registrars of voters of such parties so agree, such
284 registrars of voters may jointly appoint (A) one moderator of both
285 primaries and (B) one enrolled member of either party to serve as head
286 moderator of both primaries, (5) notwithstanding any reduction in the
287 number of primary officials as permitted by this section, any duty
288 required of primary officials by the general statutes may be performed
289 by one or more primary officials, at the direction of the registrar of
290 voters of the party of such officials, and (6) the registrar of voters shall
291 have the sole power to appoint such officials. In making such
292 appointments the registrar shall attempt, to the extent practicable, to
293 provide representation for each candidate at each polling place. The
294 provisions of section 9-436a shall apply to each candidate whose name
295 appears on the ballot, except that each such candidate, through such

296 candidate's authorized or known representative, may submit to the
297 registrar of voters the name of one designee as candidate checker for
298 each polling place, and the registrar of voters shall appoint such
299 designee as candidate checker for such candidate.

300 (d) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 9-438, the polls shall be
301 open for voting at the primary between the hours of six o'clock a.m. and
302 eight o'clock p.m.

303 (e) The moderator or head moderator of the primary in each town
304 shall prepare duplicate head moderator returns in the manner provided
305 by section 9-440, but notwithstanding the provisions of said section, the
306 moderator or head moderator may electronically transmit such returns
307 not later than eleven fifty-nine o'clock p.m. on primary day, provided a
308 hard copy is mailed to the [Secretary of the State] secretary not later than
309 two o'clock p.m. of the day following the primary or shall hand deliver
310 one of such returns to either the [Secretary] secretary or the state police
311 by two o'clock p.m. of the day following the primary. Any moderator or
312 head moderator, as the case may be, who fails to deliver such returns to
313 either the [Secretary] secretary or the state police by such time shall pay
314 a late filing fee of fifty dollars.

315 Sec. 7. Section 9-484 of the general statutes is repealed and the
316 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective January 1, 2027*):

317 (a) If a party's chairman did not certify (1) a formula pursuant to
318 section 9-473, as amended by this act, or (2) a requirement that all
319 delegates shall be allocated to the candidate receiving the greatest
320 number of votes notwithstanding such candidate's percentage of the
321 total votes cast for all candidates, the secretary shall determine the
322 number of delegates to be so allocated to each candidate of each such
323 party in accordance with the provisions of this section, provided such
324 allocations when the party rules do not provide for ranked-choice
325 voting shall be made under subsection (b) of this section and such
326 allocations when the party rules do provide for ranked-choice voting
327 shall be made under subsection (c) of this section. As used in this section,
328 "ranked-choice voting", "active candidate" and "withdrawn candidate"

329 have the same meanings as provided in section 1 of this act.

330 (b) [Such determination shall be made separately for delegates to be
331 selected at large and delegates to be selected from each district. Any] (1)
332 For allocations under this subsection when party rules do not provide
333 for ranked-choice voting, any percentage required to be determined, in
334 accordance with the provisions of this [section] subsection, shall be
335 rounded off to the nearest one-tenth of one per cent. As used in this
336 [section] subsection, "minimum percentage" means the ratio, expressed
337 as a percentage, that the number one bears to the total number of
338 delegates to be selected, but in no event shall such percentage exceed
339 twenty-five per cent.

340 [(c)] (2) (A) The secretary shall calculate the minimum percentage, as
341 defined in [subsection (b) of this section] subdivision (1) of this
342 subsection, using the number of delegates to be selected at large and, if
343 applicable, the number of delegates to be selected from each district
344 respectively. Except as provided in this [subsection] subdivision, a
345 candidate's percentage of the total votes cast for all candidates in the
346 state or in a district [must] is required to equal or exceed such minimum
347 percentage in order for such candidate to be allocated any at large
348 delegates or any delegates from such district, as the case may be. The
349 secretary shall determine each candidate's percentage of the total votes
350 cast for all candidates in the state and in each district. In the event two
351 or more candidates have received a percentage of such total votes cast
352 equal to or greater than the minimum percentage, the secretary shall
353 calculate an adjusted percentage, which shall be each such candidate's
354 percentage of the total votes cast for all such candidates, excluding the
355 votes cast for all other candidates. The secretary shall then calculate the
356 product of each such candidate's adjusted percentage and the total
357 number of delegates to be selected, rounding off such product to the
358 nearest integer. Such product shall be the number of delegates allocated
359 to each such candidate except as hereinafter provided.

360 [(1)] (B) If the rounding off of such products to the nearest integers
361 causes the sum of all delegates so allocated to be greater than the total

362 number of delegates to be selected at large or from the district, then one
363 delegate shall be subtracted from the number allocated to the candidate
364 who received the greatest mathematical gain from such rounding off,
365 and if necessary one delegate shall also be subtracted from the number
366 allocated to the candidate who received the next greatest gain, and so
367 on until the sum of all delegates allocated to candidates equals the total
368 number of delegates to be so selected.

369 [(2)] (C) If the rounding off of such products to the nearest integers
370 causes the sum of all delegates so allocated to be fewer than the total
371 number of delegates to be selected at large or from the district, then one
372 delegate shall be added to the number allocated to the candidate who
373 suffered the greatest mathematical loss from such rounding off, and if
374 necessary one delegate shall also be added to the number allocated to
375 the candidate who suffered the next greatest such loss, and so on until
376 the sum of all delegates allocated to candidates equals the total number
377 of delegates to be so selected.

378 [(d)] (3) In the event one or no candidate has received a percentage of
379 the total number of votes cast for all candidates equal to or greater than
380 the minimum percentage, the secretary shall calculate an adjusted
381 percentage for each of the candidates receiving the greatest and second
382 greatest number of votes cast for all candidates. The adjusted percentage
383 shall be such candidate's percentage of the total number of votes cast for
384 both such candidates, excluding the total number of votes cast for all
385 other candidates. The secretary shall determine the number of delegates
386 allocated to each candidate by using the same procedure as prescribed
387 in [subsection (c) of this section] subdivision (2) of this subsection.

388 (c) (1) For allocations under this subsection when party rules do
389 provide for ranked-choice voting, the secretary shall determine the
390 number of delegates, if any, to be allocated at large to each candidate
391 and, if applicable, the number of delegates, if any, to be allocated to each
392 candidate from each district respectively. An active candidate's
393 percentage of the votes received by all active candidates in the state or
394 in a district is required to equal or exceed fifteen per cent in order for

395 such candidate to be allocated any at large delegates or any delegates
396 from such district, as the case may be. The secretary shall determine each
397 candidate's percentage of the votes received by all active candidates
398 under ranked-choice voting in the state and in each district. Each ballot
399 shall count as one vote for the highest-ranked candidate on such ballot
400 and shall be deemed a vote for delegates pledged to support such
401 candidate in accordance with party rules or applicable provisions of this
402 title. Any rankings for withdrawn candidates shall be treated as
403 rankings for eliminated candidates. If the vote total for any active
404 candidate is less than fifteen per cent, the active candidate with the
405 fewest votes shall be eliminated and the votes for the eliminated
406 candidate shall be counted for each ballot's next highest-ranked active
407 candidate. If the vote total of all active candidates is above fifteen per
408 cent, tabulation shall be complete. For the purpose of section 9-482,
409 votes cast for a candidate and each candidate's percentage of total votes
410 shall be determined by the secretary on the basis of the votes received
411 in the final round of tabulation. The secretary shall then calculate the
412 product of each such active candidate's percentage and the total number
413 of delegates to be selected, rounding off such product to the nearest
414 integer. Such product shall be the number of delegates allocated to each
415 such candidate except as hereinafter provided.

416 (2) If the rounding off of such products to the nearest integers causes
417 the sum of all delegates so allocated to be greater than the total number
418 of delegates to be selected at large or from the district, then one delegate
419 shall be subtracted from the number allocated to the candidate who
420 received the greatest mathematical gain from such rounding off, and if
421 necessary one delegate shall also be subtracted from the number
422 allocated to the candidate who received the next greatest gain, and so
423 on until the sum of all delegates allocated to candidates equals the total
424 number of delegates to be so selected.

425 (3) If the rounding off of such products to the nearest integers causes
426 the sum of all delegates so allocated to be fewer than the total number
427 of delegates to be selected at large or from the district, then one delegate
428 shall be added to the number allocated to the candidate who suffered

429 the greatest mathematical loss from such rounding off, and if necessary
 430 one delegate shall also be added to the number allocated to the
 431 candidate who suffered the next greatest such loss, and so on until the
 432 sum of all delegates allocated to candidates equals the total number of
 433 delegates to be so selected.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	9-173
Sec. 3	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	9-444
Sec. 5	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	9-473
Sec. 6	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	9-476
Sec. 7	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	9-484

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 1(c)(1)(B)(i), "preference, except that if such" was changed to "preference. If such" and "five such candidates" was changed to "five candidates" for clarity; in Section 1(e), "section 9-445 of the general statutes, or section 9-311a of the general statutes" was changed to "section 9-445 or 9-311a of the general statutes" for conciseness; in Section 3(b)(2), "and any similar reference thereto" was changed to "and of any similar reference to the per cent of such votes" for clarity; in Section 4(b)(2), "January 1, 2026" was changed to "January 1, 2027" for accuracy; in Section 5(a), "timeline" was changed to "deadline" for consistency; in Section 5(b), "deadline set" was changed to "deadline established" for consistency; in Section 7, the provisions of Subsecs. (b)(2) and (c) were subdivided and redesignated for clarity; and in Section 7(c)(1), the penultimate sentence was redrafted for clarity.

GAE *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 26 \$	FY 27 \$
Secretary of the State	GF - Cost	965,791- 1,365,751	1,461,583
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	101,619	170,306

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 26 \$	FY 27 \$
Various Municipalities	Cost	None	Up to 2,400,000

Explanation

The bill authorizes ranked choice voting (RCV) for presidential preference primaries beginning in FY 28, and for municipal elections and all other primaries beginning in FY 27 resulting in the fiscal impacts described below.

Section 1 of the bill requires the Secretary of the State (SOTS) to set the type of ballot to be used in RCV elections and the secretary to preapprove the RCV ballots prior to printing and usage requiring SOTS to hire one employee² at a cost of \$129,683 in FY 26 and FY 27 with an associated fringe cost of \$61,081. The SOTS will need two³ additional

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 40.71% of payroll in FY 26.

²This position is an RCV Program Manager position.

³These positions include an Administrative Assistant, and an Elections Officer.

positions at a cost of \$145,832 beginning in FY 27, with an associated fringe cost of \$68,687. These positions are required to approve and oversee the design of RCV ballots in each participating municipality in compliance with the provisions of this section.

Additionally, this section requires that voting tabulators under certain conditions can process RCV ballots and produce applicable information from the ballots processed resulting in a one-time cost to the state of \$750,000 to \$1,050,000 in FY 26 and an ongoing cost beginning in FY 27 of \$100,000. The FY 26 cost is associated with the software⁴ required for tabulators to process RCV ballots, and software to update the states Election Management System (EMS) and Election Night Reporting System (ENR)⁵ to display and count RCV ballots. The FY 27 cost is associated with the maintenance and upkeep of the upgraded systems.

Sections 3-7 establish a variety of provisions related to RCV for municipal elections, party conventions and most primaries beginning in FY 27 resulting in a cost to municipalities of up to \$2,400,000⁶ beginning in FY 27. This cost is associated with additional labor costs, and printing costs related to the implementation of RCV. The exact cost will vary by town, the number of towns that adopt RCV, and if a major party were to adopt RCV for primaries.

To support participating municipalities, the SOTS will need to conduct a public information campaign to inform the public of changes to current procedures resulting in a cost of approximately \$1,000,000 in FY 27. This funding is required to support public awareness of voting changes, and procedures to reduce the number of ineligible ballots during participating elections.

⁴The software itself is open source but would need to be calibrated for usage in Connecticut and is expected to cost between \$100,000-\$500,000.

⁵This is expected to cost approximately \$650,000 in FY 26.

⁶This figure assumes full implementation of RCV for the primary election beginning in FY 27. This includes the cost of RCV ballots, additional labor for each polling station, and transport costs for secure transport memory sticks from the town to SOTS.

These sections also require SOTS to create regulations to implement RCV where it is adopted, requiring SOTS to hire an additional durational staff member⁷ at a cost of \$86,068 in FY 26 and FY 27, with an associated fringe cost of \$40,538 in FY 26 and FY 27. This position is required to facilitate the adoption of regulations base on best practices in RCV voting.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation, wage increases, and the number of municipalities and parties that adopt RCV as a result of this bill. The cost of the durational employee will terminate in FY 27 unless continued.

⁷ This position is a Staff Attorney I.

OLR Bill Analysis**sSB 1536*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RANKED-CHOICE VOTING IN PARTY CAUCUSES, CONVENTIONS AND PRIMARIES, INCLUDING PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARIES, AND IN CERTAIN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.*****SUMMARY**

This bill authorizes ranked choice voting (RCV) for presidential preference primaries starting January 1, 2028, and for municipal elections and all other primaries starting January 1, 2027, except when prohibited by the state's election laws. Under the bill, RCV is a system of casting and counting votes for a particular office where (1) each voter can rank candidates based on their preferences (with "1" indicating their highest preference), (2) one or more rounds of counting are used to determine which candidates advance to the next round of tabulation based on those preferences, and (3) the candidate with the greatest number of votes after all rounds of counting wins.

Specifically, starting in 2027, for offices where only one candidate is chosen, the bill authorizes municipalities to adopt RCV by charter or ordinance for municipal elections, and major parties to adopt RCV for primaries under their party rules. A municipality or major party must implement the bill's procedures when adopting RCV. As under existing law, unchanged by the bill, candidates for offices or party nominations not subject to RCV must receive a plurality of votes (i.e. the most).

The bill also establishes specific procedures for implementing RCV generally and, starting in 2028, for major parties adopting it for presidential preference primaries under their party rules. It also makes corresponding changes for political party nominating conventions using RCV.

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2027

§ 1 — RCV GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Ballots and Tabulators

The bill requires the secretary of the state to set the type of ballot to be used in authorized RCV elections or primaries, its layout and orientation, and any instructions appearing on it. Further, any RCV ballot must be approved by the secretary.

The bill requires an RCV ballot, if possible, to list all qualified candidates in a manner allowing voters to rank them by order of preference. If it is not possible to do so, the secretary must allow voters to rank at least five candidates, and must uniformly apply this limitation to all eligible voters for that office.

For primaries, candidates must be ordered on the ballot as existing law requires (see BACKGROUND). For municipal elections, existing law considers a candidate's party designation to (1) determine the candidate's order on the ballot, (2) determine whether a party achieved minor party status for a particular race (see BACKGROUND), and (3) allow for cross endorsements. For these purposes, the bill requires RCV ballots to indicate a candidate's party designation, allowing voters to rank candidates under a specific designation.

Relatedly, state law requires that voting tabulators be able to process ballots under certain conditions and produce certain voting information, such as preventing a voter from voting for more than one candidate for the same office unless otherwise allowed. The bill requires that voting tabulators used for authorized RCV primaries and elections be able to comply with the bill's procedures.

Procedures

The bill establishes the following requirements for RCV contests in which voters nominate or elect only one candidate.

Voting Tabulation. In the first round of counting, the bill requires that a ballot be counted for the highest-ranked active candidate. Under the bill, an “active candidate” is a candidate on the ballot (or registered as a write-in candidate) who has not won, been eliminated in an earlier round, or withdrawn.

If three or more active candidates remain after the first round, the active candidate with the fewest votes after all votes have been tabulated is eliminated, and the remaining active candidates proceed to the next round. The votes for the eliminated candidate are transferred to the remaining active candidates based on the rank expressed on the ballots. This process continues until there are less than three active candidates. Once this has occurred, the active candidate with the most votes wins.

Tie Votes. If there is a tie between the candidates with the fewest votes, and one must be eliminated, the elimination is determined by lot, as set in the secretary’s regulations that she must adopt (see below). If there is a tie between the final two candidates, the tie is broken in accordance with the applicable state law.

Voter Ranking Issues. Under the bill, a voter’s ballot is not counted if it ranks no active candidate (i.e. an undervote). If a ballot skips a number when ranking candidates or ranks the same candidate at different ranks (e.g., cross-endorsed candidates), the ballot is counted for the highest-ranked active candidate. If all the candidates a voter ranked are no longer active, or if a voter ranked two candidates at the same level (e.g., ranked two different candidates as their second choice) and all higher-ranked candidates are no longer active (i.e. an inactive ballot), the voter’s ballot is no longer counted.

Recanvass. Existing law generally requires that if the difference in votes between the top two candidates is (1) less than 0.5% of the total number of votes cast for the office, but not more than 1,000 votes for a primary or not more than 2,000 votes for an election, or (2) less than 20 votes, a recanvass (i.e. recount) must be conducted. To determine if an automatic recount is triggered under these provisions for an RCV

election or primary, the bill requires evaluating the difference between the total votes of the winning candidate and the remaining active candidate.

Regulations

The secretary of the state must adopt regulations to implement these provisions.

§§ 3 & 4 — PARTY CONVENTION-SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

When a major party adopts RCV as part of its rules, the bill requires that the party's chairperson or authorized representative notify the secretary of the state, or her designee, in accordance with the process and timeline she established.

For parties that have adopted RCV, the bill also establishes certain exemptions or procedures when endorsing candidates for nomination to state or district office or state legislator at political party conventions. Specifically, the provisions below apply when choosing among three or more candidates and only one candidate may be endorsed (a covered convention).

Voting and Records. Whenever a vote is taken on a party's endorsement between two or more candidates, current law requires the convention's clerk or secretary to conduct it by roll call and record each delegate's vote. The bill eliminates this requirement for covered conventions.

Additionally, similar to the existing law for roll call votes, the bill requires a convention's clerk or secretary to (1) keep an accurate written record of the vote totals received by each active candidate in each RCV round, as well as the round-by-round totals; (2) announce the round-by-round and final results; and (3) file these records at the state central committee headquarters. The records must be kept for at least 180 days after the convention adjourns and be available for public inspection at all reasonable times.

Eligibility Threshold. Various state laws require candidates to

receive a certain percentage of any roll call vote at a convention in order to meet the law's requirements. For example, the law allows any candidate who received at least 15% of the vote to qualify to run in the party's primary. The law also requires a candidate to receive at least 15% of the vote in order to qualify for a public campaign finance grant from the Citizens' Election Program. The bill specifies that in these and other similar situations under state law, the required percentage may be calculated based on the percentage of votes a candidate received in any RCV round at a covered convention.

§§ 5-7 — PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY

A presidential preference primary is a type of primary election in which voters indicate their preference for a particular candidate to be the party's nominee for the presidency. State law requires the parties with the largest and second-largest number of enrolled members in the state to hold a presidential preference primary if the names of two or more candidates are placed on the party's ballot (CGS §§ 9-463 & -464).

In a presidential preference primary, voters do not directly select the party's nominee. Instead, they vote for a particular candidate, and based on the vote results, state parties award delegates based on the party's system of allocating delegates. These delegates then vote to formally select a candidate as the presidential nominee at the party's national convention.

Applicable Laws (§ 6)

The law generally requires that presidential preference primaries, including any tabulations or generation of returns, be conducted, as nearly as practicable, in a manner set by the secretary of the state, with the state's laws on absentee balloting and political party nominations. Currently, they must do so unless the state's laws concerning presidential primaries say otherwise. The bill also requires these primaries be conducted under these laws unless required otherwise to implement RCV as the bill defines it.

Delegate Certification (§ 5)

By law, a party's chairman must submit a written certification to the secretary of the state with the number of delegates the party is entitled to under its rules. If any delegates are to be chosen from districts, the certification must also include the number of delegates allocated to each district and the number selected at large.

Additionally, the law allows a party to make rules (1) establishing a formula for allocating delegates based on the percentage of the vote they receive or (2) for the candidate with the most votes to receive all the delegates (i.e. winner-take-all). If a formula is used, the chairman must include it in the certification along with all necessary information to apply it. The secretary may request a written interpretation or explanation of the formula's application.

Currently, this certification must be submitted at least 14 days before a primary. The bill instead requires the secretary to establish the process and deadline for these certifications.

By law, if the chairman does not certify to the secretary how the delegates will be distributed, the secretary must determine the allocation of delegates generally in accordance with the party rules. The law, unchanged by the bill, establishes procedures for the secretary to make this determination when RCV is not used.

Allocating Delegates (§§ 5 & 7)

Party Rules (§ 5). The bill allows a party to authorize RCV through its rules starting in 2028. If it does so, it must use RCV to allocate its delegates. The rules may establish procedures for awarding delegates based on RCV (whether by formula or winner-take-all). If the rules authorize a formula, it must be included in the certification along with the necessary information to apply it. The secretary may additionally request a written interpretation or explanation of a party's RCV rules or formula.

Secretary Determination (§ 7). The bill establishes alternative allocation procedures for major parties that permit RCV but have not certified how its delegates will be allocated. As under existing law,

under the bill, the secretary must determine (1) the number of delegates to be awarded at large, (2) those to be awarded by district (if any), and (3) the percentage of the vote received by each candidate in the state and each district. Each ballot must initially be deemed to count for the highest-ranked candidate and the vote awarded to delegates pledged to vote for that candidate, as required under the applicable party's rules or state law.

By law, the secretary must also determine the number of votes cast for each candidate and the total number of votes cast, including the totals of each district, if applicable. Under the bill, for RCV primaries, these totals must be based on the final tabulation of votes.

To receive any delegates, a candidate must receive at least 15% of the total vote in the entire state or a specific district, as applicable. The tabulation is considered complete if the vote total for all active candidates is 15% or greater. If any active candidate has less than 15%, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and that candidate's votes are transferred to the candidates ranked next by each ballot. Any rankings for withdrawn candidates are treated as rankings for eliminated candidates.

Once the tabulation is complete, the secretary must calculate the number of delegates to be awarded for each candidate by multiplying each candidate's vote percentage by the total number of delegates to be selected, rounding off to the nearest whole number.

If, due to the rounding, the total number of awarded delegates for all candidates does not match the authorized number of delegates, the secretary must add or subtract a delegate, as necessary, from the candidate who had the largest difference between the calculated number and the rounded number. She must continue this process for the candidates with the next largest differences until the number of allocated delegates equals the authorized number.

Secretary's Instructions (§ 6)

The bill requires the secretary to issue and publish on her office's

website written instructions for implementing policies and procedures regarding tabulating and publishing preliminary, round-by-round, and final RCV results. (The bill does not establish a deadline by which the secretary must do so.) The instructions must also require that if a candidate withdraws on the day of the primary as allowed by law, any ballot cast before the primary ranking that candidate first must be counted as a vote for the next-highest-ranked candidate on the ballot.

The instructions must also account for certain procedures requested in writing by a party's chairman if the party uses RCV. The secretary must do so if the requested procedures are reasonable, compatible with the use of RCV ballots, and can be implemented using existing voting tabulators, including any associated hardware and software.

BACKGROUND

Ballot Order for Primary Candidates

State law generally requires the secretary to (1) place the party-endorsed candidate in the first row of the ballot and mark the name with an asterisk and (2) order all other candidates alphabetically based on the candidate's last name (CGS § 9-437).

Minor Party Status

Under Connecticut's election system, candidates running for office can get their names on the ballot in one of three ways: (1) nomination by a major party, (2) nomination by a minor party, and (3) nomination by a nominating petition. The law differentiates how a candidate may gain ballot access depending on whether the party is major or minor.

Under current law, a "minor party" is one that is not a major party and whose candidate for the office in question received, under the same party designation, at least 1% of the votes cast for the same office at the last regular election. In other words, unlike major parties, minor parties qualify for ballot access on a case-by-case basis and cannot nominate candidates to offices for which they have not achieved minor party status.

By law, if the party does not have minor party status for a particular

office, a person may run under the party's designation only by submitting a signed petition to the secretary of the state. Under current law, it must be signed by (1) 1% of the qualified electors for the same office in the last-preceding election or (2) 7,500 qualified electors (1% is usually the lower threshold and therefore the one most petitioners must meet). For example, if a person is running for state senator, the petition must be signed by a total number of voters that equals 1% of all the voters that cast a ballot for the same state senate race in the last election.

Related Bill

sSB 1156, favorably reported by the Government Administration and Elections Committee, allows minor parties to nominate candidates for all elections if any candidate running for statewide office under that party's designation receives at least 1% of the vote for that office.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/27/2025)