

SENATE BILL NO. 428

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections

on January 30, 2024)

(Patron Prior to Substitute--Senator VanValkenburg)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-673.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to elections; conduct of election; ranked choice voting; locally elected offices; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 24.2-673.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-673.1. (Expires July 1, 2031) Ranked choice voting.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Ranked choice voting" means a method of casting and tabulating votes in which (i) voters rank candidates in order of preference, (ii) tabulation proceeds in rounds such that in each of round either a candidate or candidates are elected or the last-place candidate is defeated, (iii) votes for voters' next-ranked candidates are transferred from elected or defeated candidates, and (iv) tabulation ends when the number of candidates elected equals the number of offices to be filled. "Ranked choice voting" is known as "instant runoff voting" when electing a single office and "single transferable vote" when electing multiple offices.

"Ranking" means the ordinal number assigned on a ballot by a voter to a candidate to express the voter's preference for that candidate. ~~Ranking number one~~ The first ranking is the highest ranking, the second ranking ~~number two~~ is the next-highest ranking, and so on, consecutively, up to the number of candidates indicated on the ballot.

~~B. Elections of members of a county board of supervisors or a city council~~ for any local or constitutional office may be conducted by ranked choice voting pursuant to this section. The decision to conduct an election by ranked choice voting shall be made, in consultation with the local electoral board and general registrar, by a majority vote of the ~~board of supervisors or city council that the office being elected serves~~ local governing body and shall be subject to a determination of feasibility by the State

27 Board. The decision to use ranked choice voting in an election for any constitutional office that is shared
28 by two or more units of government shall require a majority vote of the governing body of each county or
29 city that shares such office. Any decision to conduct an election by ranked choice voting made by a local
30 governing body shall be transmitted to the State Board, which shall provide a determination of feasibility
31 within 10 days of receipt of the decision or, in the case of a shared office, within 10 days of receipt of the
32 decisions of all of the localities that share the office.

33 If a majority of the members of a town council vote to conduct an election for town council by
34 ranked choice voting, the board of supervisors may require the town to reimburse the county for costs
35 associated with conducting the election by ranked choice voting that would not have been incurred by the
36 county absent the town council's decision to conduct the election by ranked choice
37 voting.

38 C. In any election conducted by ranked choice voting, as soon as the polls are closed on the day of
39 the election, the officers of election for each precinct shall proceed to ascertain the vote and prepare returns
40 for the first rankings made for such election in the same manner as provided for votes in other elections
41 under this article. The results for elections conducted by ranked choice voting shall be reported along with
42 other results reported on election night, except that such results shall clearly be identified as preliminary
43 and based on the first rankings in a ranked choice voting election.

44 D. In any election conducted by ranked choice voting for a local or constitutional office that is not
45 shared by more than one county or city, final tabulation of votes shall be conducted at the meeting of the
46 electoral board held pursuant to § 24.2-671.

47 E. In any election conducted by ranked choice voting for a local or constitutional office that is
48 shared by more than one county or city, the electoral boards shall agree on a suitable tabulation facility in
49 which to securely store the election materials and conduct the final tabulation of votes in the ranked choice
50 voting election after the local electoral boards have met pursuant to § 24.2-671. The electoral boards shall
51 provide for secure delivery of the election materials to the tabulation facility by at least one election
52 official representing each party. The State Board shall (i) promulgate rules and forms to document the

53 chain of custody from the office of the general registrar to the tabulation facility and (ii) specify the
54 materials required to accomplish such transmittal, including tamper evident packaging and seals.

55 The final tabulation of votes shall be conducted by the electoral boards of the relevant localities
56 and their officers of election pursuant to standards developed by the State Board. The final tabulation shall
57 be open to the public. The electoral boards shall provide public notice of the place and time of the final
58 tabulation.

59 F. If, in the process of tabulating final results for an election conducted by ranked choice voting,
60 any machine readable ballot is damaged or defective so that it cannot properly be counted by the electronic
61 voting systems, a true duplicate copy shall be made of the damaged ballot by a team of election officials
62 representing both parties. The duplicate ballot shall be substituted for the damaged ballot. Every duplicate
63 ballot shall be clearly labeled as such and shall bear an identifier that shall be recorded on the damaged
64 ballot.

65 G. The Department shall make public the total number and percentage of votes each candidate
66 received in each round of the official tabulation, including votes for candidates who have withdrawn
67 pursuant to § 24.2-612.2, and ballot-level ranking data on an election-by-election basis to the extent
68 feasible and consistent with the need to maintain voter privacy.

69 H. The State Board shall provide standards for vote tabulating software for use with existing voting
70 systems in elections conducted by ranked choice voting. Any person, firm, or corporation manufacturing,
71 owning, or offering for sale any vote tabulation software designed to be used with existing voting systems
72 may apply to the State Board, in the manner prescribed by the Board, to have examined a production
73 version of such software. A governing body that makes the decision to conduct elections by ranked choice
74 voting shall provide for the use of vote tabulating software approved by the Board in any such elections.

75 I. The State Board ~~may~~ shall promulgate regulations for the proper and efficient administration of
76 elections determined by ranked choice voting, including (i) procedures for tabulating and reporting votes
77 in rounds, (ii) procedures for determining winners in elections for offices to which only one candidate is
78 being elected and to which more than one candidate is being elected, and (iii) standards for ballots pursuant
79 to § 24.2-613, notwithstanding the provisions of subsection E of that section.

80 ~~D.~~J. The State Board may administer or prescribe standards for a voter outreach and public
81 information program for use by any locality conducting ranked choice voting pursuant to this section. The
82 State Board shall produce generalized voter education materials on ranked choice voting that shall be
83 published on its website and shall assist any locality that has made the decision to conduct elections by
84 ranked choice voting in developing voter education materials specific to that locality upon request.

85 K. Any risk-limiting audit of elections conducted by ranked choice voting pursuant to § 24.2-671.2
86 shall be limited to an audit of first rankings reported by voting systems.

87 L. For the purposes of conducting a recount pursuant to Article 1 (§ 24.2-800 et seq.) of Chapter
88 8, the State Board shall have the authority to create and modify recount procedures to the extent necessary
89 to accommodate a recount of an election conducted by ranked choice voting.

90 **2. That the Department of Elections (the Department) shall review the testing and approval**
91 **framework for voting equipment in the Commonwealth. In conducting its review, the Department**
92 **shall (i) review the types of voting equipment covered by state law; (ii) review emerging forms of**
93 **voting equipment, such as electronic pollbooks, risk-limiting audit tools, and tabulation software,**
94 **including such audit tools and software that can be purchased and operated separate from existing**
95 **voting systems; (iii) review the roles and responsibilities of state and local election officials in the**
96 **testing and approval of voting equipment; (iv) review any existing testing and approval frameworks**
97 **for emerging forms of voting equipment; (v) develop recommendations for objective methods of**
98 **evaluating the performance of emerging forms of voting equipment to determine if they are**
99 **appropriately executing the elections tasks for which they are intended; and (vi) make other**
100 **recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted. The Department shall submit**
101 **to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its review no**
102 **later than the first day of the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary**
103 **and report shall be submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures**
104 **of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and**
105 **reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.**

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