

SENATE BILL NO. 428

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Privileges and Elections

on _____)

(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 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 and shall be subject to a determination of feasibility by the State Board. Any decision to conduct an election by ranked choice

27 voting made by a local governing body shall be transmitted to the State Board, which shall provide a
28 determination of feasibility within 10 days of receipt of the decision or, in the case of a shared office,
29 within 10 days of receipt of the decisions of all of the localities that share the office.

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

36 D. In any election conducted by ranked choice voting final tabulation of votes shall be conducted
37 at the meeting of the electoral board held pursuant to § 24.2-671.

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

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45 received in each round of the official tabulation, including votes for candidates who have withdrawn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

48 G. The State Board shall provide standards for vote tabulating software for use with existing voting
49 systems in elections conducted by ranked choice voting. Any person, firm, or corporation manufacturing,
50 owning, or offering for sale any vote tabulation software designed to be used with existing voting systems
51 may apply to the State Board, in the manner prescribed by the Board, to have examined a production
52 version of such software. A local governing body that makes the decision to conduct elections by ranked

53 choice voting shall provide for the use of vote tabulating software approved by the Board in any such
54 elections.

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

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

65 J. A local electoral board may request a risk-limiting audit of an election conducted by ranked
66 choice voting pursuant to subsection D of § 24.2-671.2. Any such risk-limiting audit shall be limited to
67 an audit of first rankings reported by voting systems. An election conducted by ranked choice voting shall
68 not be included in any random drawing required by subsection C of § 24.2-671.2, nor shall any risk-
69 limiting audit of such election satisfy any of the requirements of subdivision C 4 of § 24.2-671.2.

70 K. For the purposes of conducting a recount pursuant to Article 1 (§ 24.2-800 et seq.) of Chapter
71 8, the State Board shall have the authority to create and modify recount procedures to the extent necessary
72 to accommodate a recount of an election conducted by ranked choice voting.

73 **2. That the Department of Elections (the Department) shall review the testing and approval**
74 **framework for voting equipment in the Commonwealth. In conducting its review, the Department**
75 **shall (i) review the types of voting equipment covered by state law; (ii) review emerging forms of**
76 **voting equipment, such as electronic pollbooks, risk-limiting audit tools, and tabulation software,**
77 **including such audit tools and software that can be purchased and operated separate from existing**
78 **voting systems; (iii) review the roles and responsibilities of state and local election officials in the**
79 **testing and approval of voting equipment; (iv) review any existing testing and approval frameworks**

80 for emerging forms of voting equipment; (v) develop recommendations for objective methods of
81 evaluating the performance of emerging forms of voting equipment to determine if they are
82 appropriately executing the elections tasks for which they are intended; and (vi) make other
83 recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted. The Department shall submit
84 to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its review no
85 later than the first day of the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary
86 and report shall be submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures
87 of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and
88 reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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