



CITY COUNCILMEMBER  
**RIGEL ROBINSON**  
 DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR  
 May 28, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson  
 Subject: Support for SB 212 (Ranked Choice Voting) and SB 641 (Special Elections: Rank Choice Voting)

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to Assemblymember Allen supporting SB 212, which would authorize a city, county, or local educational agency to conduct an election using ranked choice voting, and SB 641, which would authorize the Governor to require a special election to fill a vacancy in a congressional or legislative office using rank choice voting, if the jurisdiction is capable of using this voting method.

BACKGROUND

Under current law, general law cities are provided with procedures with which election of candidates for elective offices, and are incapable of adopting alternative voting methods.

In multiple cities, ranked choice voting has led to greater voter participation. In 2017, four cities introduced ranked choice voting elections, and all cities had higher turnout than in prior elections.<sup>1</sup> Voters using ranked choice voting have been more satisfied with candidates' conduct.<sup>2</sup> According to exit polls, approximately eighty-four percent of voters who participated in ranked choice voting said the new RCV-formatted ballot was easy to complete.<sup>3</sup>

Voters who use ranked choice voting system overwhelmingly vote in favor of expanding the system.<sup>4</sup> The City of Berkeley has been utilizing rank choice voting since 2010.<sup>5</sup> In the Bay Area specifically, rank choice voting has eliminated costly runoff elections, given more wins to women and people of color, and increased voter turnout.<sup>6</sup>

This amendment would grant each local jurisdiction the authority to determine the best voting method for that jurisdiction, despite general law city status.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/the\\_facts\\_of\\_ranked\\_choice\\_voting\\_voters\\_like\\_it\\_high\\_turnouts\\_are\\_trending](https://www.fairvote.org/the_facts_of_ranked_choice_voting_voters_like_it_high_turnouts_are_trending)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/ranked\\_choice\\_voting\\_again\\_embraced\\_by\\_bay\\_area\\_voters\\_and\\_candidates](https://www.fairvote.org/ranked_choice_voting_again_embraced_by_bay_area_voters_and_candidates)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cityofberkeley.info/rcv/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.fairvote.org/ranked\\_choice\\_voting\\_again\\_embraced\\_by\\_bay\\_area\\_voters\\_and\\_candidates](https://www.fairvote.org/ranked_choice_voting_again_embraced_by_bay_area_voters_and_candidates)

Existing law requires the Governor to call a special election by proclamation within 14 calendar days of a vacancy within a congressional or legislative office.

SB 641 would authorize the Governor to require that a special election be conducted by rank choice voting, if the affected jurisdiction are capable of conducting elections utilizing rank choice voting and the Secretary of State approves the rank choice voting method to be used.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170  
Naomi Garcia, Intern of Councilmember Rigel Robinson

Attachments:

1: Letter of support to Senator Allen

2: Bill Text - SB 212

([https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200SB212](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB212))

3: Bill Text - SB 641

(<https://legiscan.com/CA/text/SB641/2019>)

The Honorable Ben Allen  
Member of the Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 5072  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 212 – Local Voting Methods and SB 641 – Special Elections

Dear Senator Allen,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey its full support for SB 212 and SB 641.

In multiple cities including Berkeley, ranked choice voting has led to greater voter participation. In 2017, four cities introduced ranked choice voting elections, and all cities had higher turnout than in prior elections. Voters using ranked choice voting have been more satisfied with candidates' conduct. According to exit polls, approximately eighty-four percent of voters who participated in ranked choice voting said the new RCV-formatted ballot was easy to complete.

The City of Berkeley has been utilizing rank choice voting since 2010. In the Bay Area specifically, rank choice voting has eliminated runoff elections, given more wins to women and people of color, and increased voter turnout.

Both of these bills are great steps towards achieving a more representative electoral system.

Thank you for introducing these important pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,  
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner  
Assemblymember Buffy Wicks

