

CITY OF SEATTLE
ORDINANCE 126625
COUNCIL BILL 120369

AN ORDINANCE relating to ranked choice voting; requesting that a special election be held concurrent with the November 8, 2022 general election for submission to the qualified electors of the City of a proposition to institute ranked choice voting for primary elections for City of Seattle elected offices; adding a new Chapter 2.18 to the Seattle Municipal Code; proposing a ballot title; and ratifying and confirming certain prior acts.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. A new Chapter 2.18 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

Chapter 2.18 PRIMARY ELECTIONS

2.18.010 Findings

The City Council makes the following findings of fact and declarations:

A. A healthy and strong representative democracy depends on voting that allows the people to fully express their will.

B. The City is empowered to provide for its own election of officers consistent with general election laws, which includes the use of a primary election to winnow candidates to a final list of two for the general election based on the number of votes cast for each candidate.

C. Ranked choice voting allows voters to indicate their order of preference for the candidates running in each race and allows for the election of candidates with the greatest support from voters, better reflecting the voters' will.

D. Ranked choice voting has been used successfully in elections in states and cities across the United States.

2.18.020 Ranked choice voting

1 Ranked choice voting shall be used in City of Seattle primary elections as soon as practicable for
2 King County Elections. The City Council requests that King County Elections implement the
3 provisions of this Chapter 2.18 no later than 2027 to select the top two candidates for elective
4 offices of The City of Seattle as those offices are designated in City Charter Article XIX.

5 A. Nominating primaries shall be conducted using the bottoms-up method of ranked
6 choice voting. Voters shall receive ballots that enable them to rank candidates in order of
7 preference. Each voter's ballot shall count as a single vote for whichever candidate the voter has
8 ranked the highest. King County Elections shall count votes in rounds. In each round, the
9 candidate who received the fewest top rankings shall be eliminated. When a candidate is
10 eliminated, a vote cast for that candidate shall be transferred to that ballot's next-highest ranked
11 remaining candidate and a new round of counting shall begin. Counting of top-ranked candidates
12 and elimination of the candidate with the fewest top rankings shall continue until two candidates
13 remain. The final two remaining candidates shall be certified as qualified to appear on the
14 general election ballot.

15 B. Only the two candidates nominated in the primary shall appear on the ballot of the
16 general election, which shall be conducted in accordance with general law governing the
17 election.

18 C. The King County Director of Elections may limit the number of candidates that voters
19 are able to rank, provided that voters are allowed to rank at least five candidates if at least five
20 candidates have filed.

21 D. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Section 2.18.020, if at the end of the
22 candidate filing period two or fewer candidates have filed for an office subject to this Chapter
23 2.18, the election for that office may be conducted according to general law.

1 E. For any election subject to this Chapter 2.18, King County Elections will ensure that
2 the ballot includes appropriate instructions to voters to effectuate the purposes of this Chapter
3 2.18, such as: “Rank candidates in the order of your choice.”

4 Section 2. The City Council and Mayor find that this ordinance is on the same subject as
5 proposed in Initiative 134 – Seattle Approves. The City Council has rejected Initiative 134 and
6 proposes this ordinance as an alternative measure on the same subject pursuant to City Charter
7 Article IV, Section 1. The City Council directs that the City Clerk file this ordinance with the
8 Director of Elections of King County, Washington, as ex officio supervisor of elections,
9 requesting that the Director of Elections call and conduct a special election in the City in
10 conjunction with the state general election to be held on November 8, 2022, for the purpose of
11 submitting to the qualified electors of the City the proposition set forth in this ordinance pursuant
12 to City Charter Article IV, Section 1 and applicable law as an alternative measure different from
13 Initiative 134 but dealing with the same subject. The City Clerk is directed to certify to the King
14 County Director of Elections the ballot title approved by the City Attorney in accordance with
15 responsibilities under RCW 29A.36.071 and RCW 29A.72.050. The following ballot title
16 statement of subject and concise description are submitted to the City Attorney for consideration:

17 City of Seattle Proposition No. ___ concerns allowing voters to rank candidates in primary
18 elections.

19 This measure would allow voters in primary elections for Mayor, City Attorney, and City
20 Councilmembers to rank candidates in the voter’s order of preference. Each voter’s top-
21 ranked vote would be counted first, and the candidate receiving the fewest votes would
22 be eliminated. If a voter’s first choice received the fewest votes, then that voter’s second

1 choice would be counted in the next round, and so on until two candidates remain to
2 proceed to the general election.

3 Section 3. Certification of such proposition by the City Clerk to the King County
4 Director of Elections in accordance with law prior to the date of such election on November 8,
5 2022, and any other act consistent with the authority and prior to the effective date of this
6 ordinance, are ratified and confirmed.

7 Section 4. The provisions of this ordinance are declared to be separate and severable.
8 The invalidity of any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, or portion of this
9 ordinance, or the invalidity of its application to any person or circumstance, does not affect
10 the validity of the remainder of this ordinance or the validity of its application to other persons
11 or circumstances.

1 Section 5. To the extent necessary to submit this ordinance to the vote of the people
2 pursuant to Charter Article IV, subsection 1.D: this ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30
3 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten
4 days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section
5 1.04.020. If approved by the people, this ordinance shall take full effect pursuant to Charter
6 Article IV, subsections 1.F and 1.G.

7 Passed by the City Council the 14th day of July, 2022,
8 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this 14th day of
9 July, 2022.

10 Debara Juarez

11 President _____ of the City Council

12 Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this 19th day of July, 2022.

13 Bruce A. Harrell

14 Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

15 Filed by me this 19th day of July, 2022.

Ann Adkisson

State of Washington,
County of King

16 I, Jaci Dahlvang, certify that this is a true and correct

copy of Ord 126625, on file in the records Elizabeth M. Adkisson, Interim City Clerk

of the City of Seattle, Office of the City Clerk



17 Signed by: Jaci Dahlvang
Signature _____
Title: Leg Info Specialist II
Date: 7/29/2022