



Ranked Choice Voting/Instant Runoff Voting

What is it, and how can it help?

Presented to:

American Association of University Women of Georgia

April 22, 2023

Common Sense Solutions for a Healthy Democracy

TOPICS/AGENDA:

- About Better Ballot Georgia
- My Background
- Issues with the Current System
- Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting
- How it Works
- Current Progress
- How You Can Help



About Better Ballot Georgia



Common Sense Solutions for a
Healthy Democracy

- Founded in summer, 2020 as *Non-partisan*, educational group, organized in accordance with Section 501(c)(3)
- Volunteer-run
- Focused on educating and inspiring GA citizens to work towards fixing what's broken in our elections processes.

My Background

- Georgia resident for 30 years
- Graduated from The University of Georgia, 2003, Political Science and International Affairs
- Former Congressional Candidate, U.S. House, Georgia District 7

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Issues with The Current System

- Voters Are Losing Confidence
- Negative Campaigns Targeted at Narrow Voter Bases
- Reluctance of Qualified Candidates to Run
- Constant Runoff Elections:
 - *Costly and Paid for by the Taxpayers of Georgia*
 - *Limited Choices*
 - *Significant Dropoff in Voter Turnout*



How Georgia get here to begin with...? Blame Denmark.



Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting

- Discourages Negative Campaigning
- Eliminates Runoff Elections and voter attrition
- Solves the “wasted vote” problem
- Eliminates the “spoiler” effect
- Elects the candidate with the broadest appeal
- Increases Candidate Participation for Women & Minorities
- Saves Millions of Taxpayer Dollars



Ranked Choice Voting

More Civil Campaigns



Campaign Ad Civility - Georgia 2020 Runoff

- Almost **500 ads** between general and runoff elections
- About **70% negative ads**
- **\$450 million** spent on ads
- Top ads ran **311-344 times PER DAY!**

“Negative ads in Georgia Senate runoff race go from strange to absurd.” Barnini Chakraborty, Washington Examiner. 1/4/2021.
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/negative-ads-in-georgia-senate-runoff-race-go-from-strange-to-absurd/ar-BB1csZdY>



Ranked Choice Voting

More Civil Campaigns

AS A CANDIDATE, YOU HAVE TO TALK TO EVERYBODY, EVEN THE PEOPLE WHO YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT THEIR FIRST CHOICE. IT CHANGES THE WAY YOU RUN CAMPAIGNS.

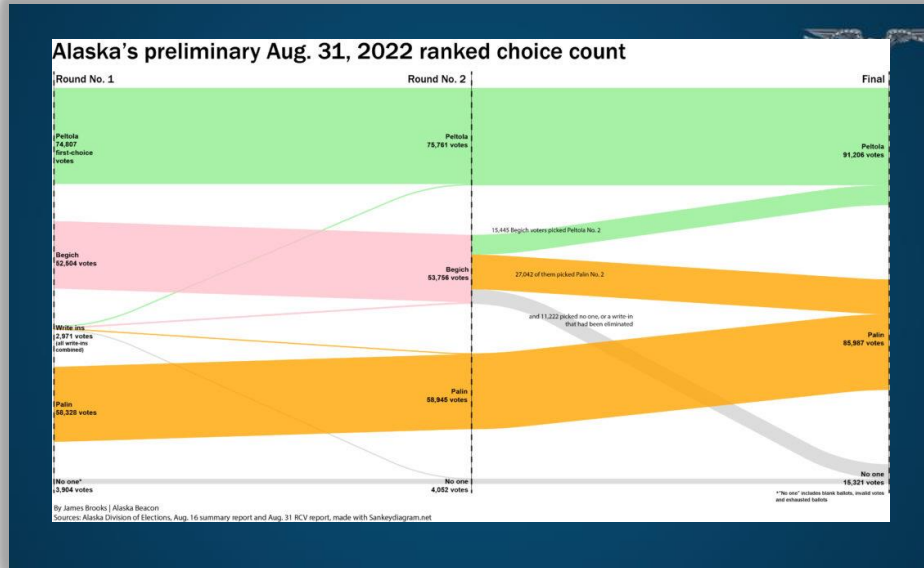


— Libby Schaaf
Mayor of Oakland



Ranked Choice Voting

How Campaign Ad Civility Works - Alaska 2022 Primary



- Mary Peltola (D) won by getting Republican votes
- 29% of Begich votes went to Peltola in last round.
- Message of inclusion and broad appeal won out over divisiveness

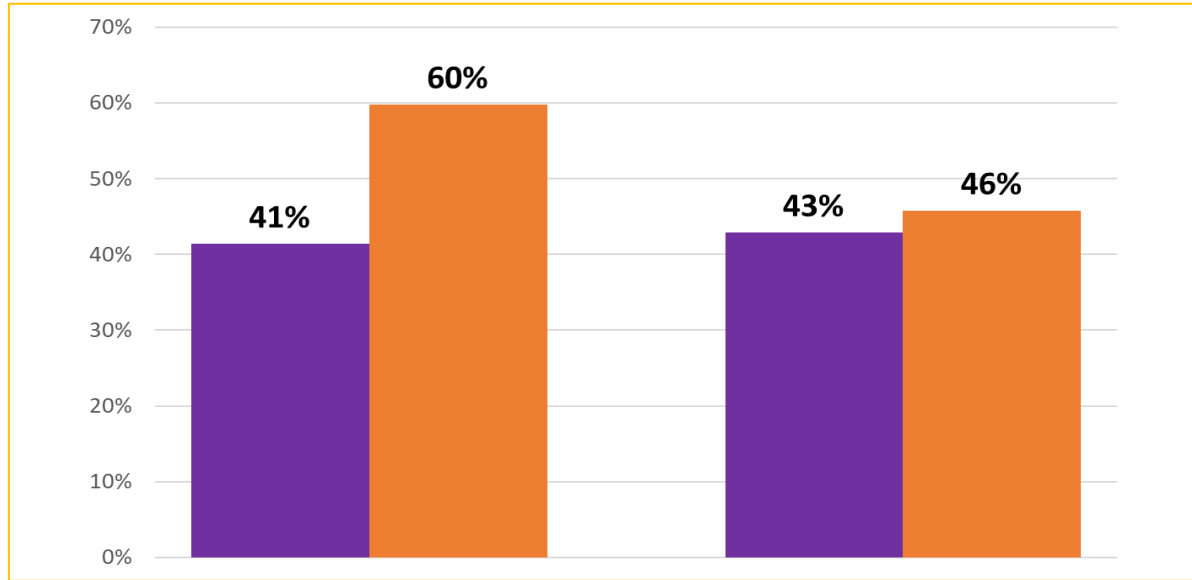
- 50% of the Begich vote went to fellow Republican Palin in the final round.
- 21% of Begich voters picked no one as a second choice (or eliminated write-in)



Ranked Choice Voting

More Minority Representatives

Percentage People of Color
Winning Office



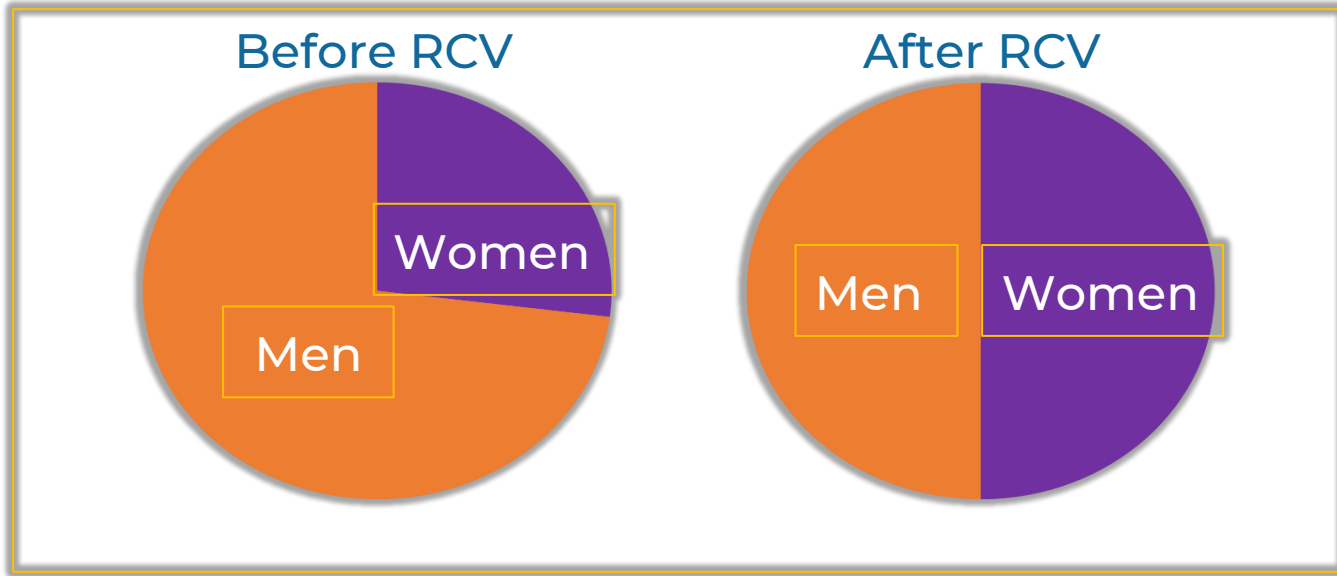
Before RCV
After RCV

Cities that adopted RCV

Cities that did not adopt RCV

Ranked Choice Voting

More Women Representatives



Women's Representation on City Councils...

Ranked Choice Voting

Runoff Turnout

Runoff elections tend to bring out far fewer voters:

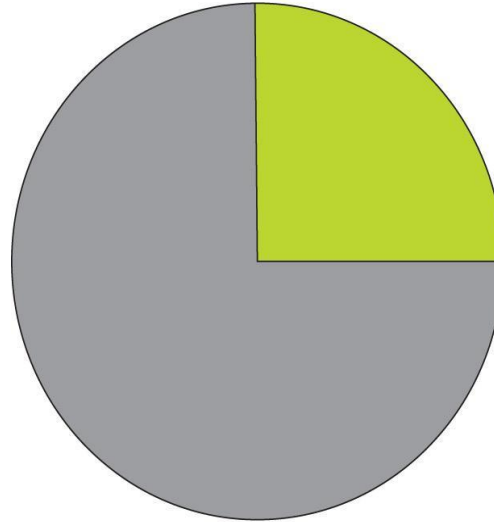
- Average 30-50% decrease
- Largest decrease tends to be among voters of color
- Greater decline in turnout for a candidate = almost certain loss



Georgia Primary 2022

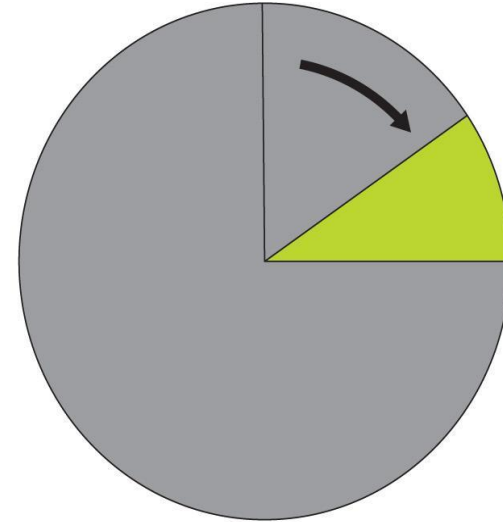
In six Congressional and four Statewide races requiring runoffs, an average of 62% of first round voters did not return to vote in the runoff.

Just 25% of eligible Georgia voters voted for Governor in a 2022 primary



5/24/2022
Primary Election Day

Ten down-ballot races did not produce a majority winner, and only 9.5% of the electorate determined the outcome in these races!



6/21/2022
Primary Election Day (runoff)




Data based on voter totals reported by Georgia SoS

GA CD7 - 1st Round of Primary – May 24, 2022

Republican primary election

Republican primary for U.S. House Georgia District 7

Michael Corbin and Mark Gonsalves advanced to a runoff. They defeated Lisa McCoy, Mary West, and Y.G. Nyghtstorm in the Republican primary for U.S. House Georgia District 7 on May 24, 2022.

	Candidate	%	Votes
✓	 Michael Corbin 	 41.2	18,546
✓	 Mark Gonsalves 	 27.3	12,311
	 Lisa McCoy 	 14.1	6,338
	 Mary West	 9.7	4,346
	 Y.G. Nyghtstorm	 7.7	3,485

BP There were no incumbents in this race. Source

Total votes: 45,026

- 5 candidates
- 45,026 total votes cast
- Leading candidate received 18,546 votes or 41.2% of votes cast
- Runoff required









GA CD7 2nd Round Runoff – June 21, 2022

Republican primary runoff election

Republican primary runoff for U.S. House Georgia District 7

Mark Gonsalves defeated Michael Corbin in the Republican primary runoff for U.S. House Georgia District 7 on June 21, 2022.

	Candidate	%	Votes
✓	 Mark Gonsalves 	 70.1	8,177
	 Michael Corbin 	 29.9	3,490

BP There were no incumbents in this race. [Source 1](#) [Source 2](#)

Total votes: 11,667

- Only 11,667 votes cast vs. 45,026 in primary
- Voter turnout dropped by 33,359 votes or 74%
- Second place finisher in primary won with only 8,177 votes



My Personal Observations

- **VOTERS SIMPLY DID NOT KNOW ABOUT THE RUNOFF!!**
- ❖ Lack of voter awareness
- ❖ Confusion amongst voters “why was there a runoff?”
- ❖ Burden solely on the candidates to create awareness
- ❖ Frustrated voters – before and after
- ❖ Results not representative of the constituency at large
- ❖ Thousands of votes in the trash “wasted votes”



Runoff Cost to Taxpayers



- How much did the Jan 5, 2021 Senate runoff election cost Georgia taxpayers...?
- Fulton County alone spent **over \$6 Million**
- Statewide estimates are **roughly \$75 Million**

A Simple Solution: Ranked Choice Voting

Also called Ranked Choice Voting



What Is Ranked Choice Voting?

Ballot

	1ST CHOICE	2ND CHOICE	3RD CHOICE
CANDIDATE A	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CANDIDATE B	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CANDIDATE C	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

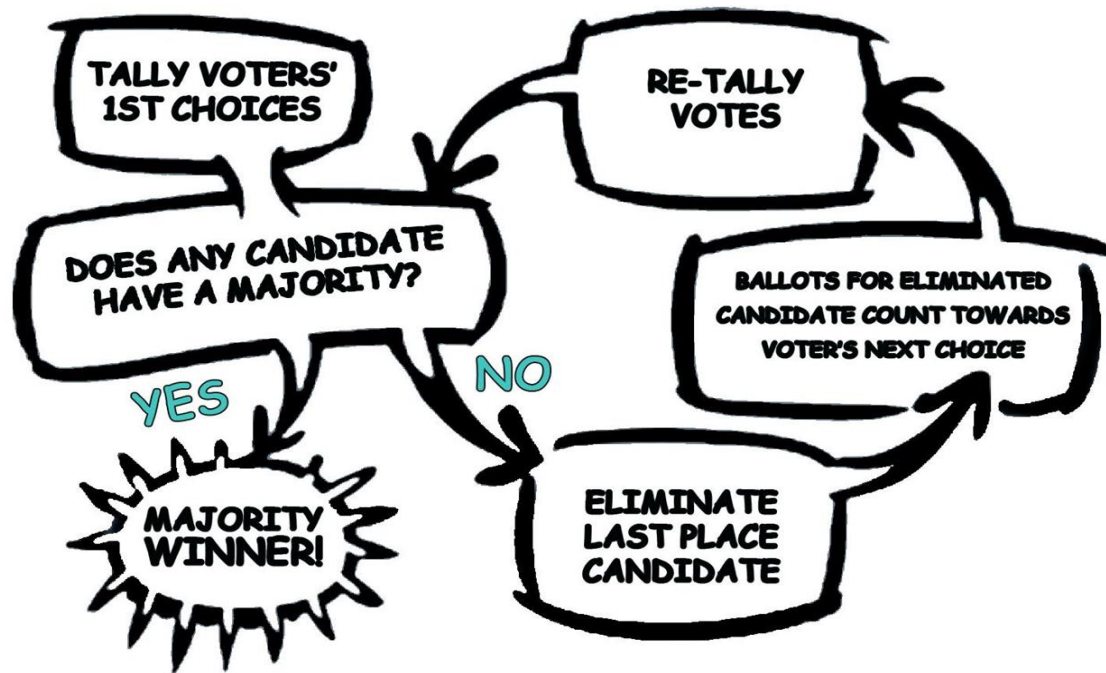
It's Simple!

- Decide which candidate you like best.
- Decide who else you would prefer after that.
- Select those candidates in order on your ballot.

It's just like ranking your favorite songs, sports players, or foods.



Instant Runoff Voting (AKA Ranked Choice Voting) is really simple.



New York City Mayoral Primary - 2021

Round-by-Round Results, NYC Democratic Mayoral Primary

Candidate	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8
Eric Adams	30.7%	30.8%	30.8%	31.2%	31.7%	34.6%	40.5%	50.4%
Maya Wiley	21.4%	21.4%	21.4%	22.0%	22.4%	26.1%	29.1%	
Kathryn Garcia	19.6%	19.6%	19.6%	19.9%	20.5%	24.4%	30.5%	49.6%
Andrew Yang	12.2%	12.2%	12.3%	12.6%	13.0%	14.8%		
Scott Stringer	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.7%	6.1%			
Dianne Morales	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%	3.2%	3.3%			
Raymond McGuire	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.8%	3.0%			
Shaun Donovan	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%				
Aaron Foldenauer	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%					
Art Chang	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%					
Paperboy Love Prince	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%					
Joycelyn Taylor	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%					
Isaac Wright	0.2%	0.2%						
Write-ins	0.2%							



Alaska AGAIN! – At Large Congressional Election- 2022

2022 Alaska's at-large congressional district election^[69]

Party	Candidate	Round 1			Round 2			Round 3	
		Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%
Democratic	Mary Peltola (incumbent)	128,329	48.68%	+1,038	129,433	49.20%	+7,460	136,893	54.94%
Republican	Sarah Palin	67,732	25.74%	+1,064	69,242	26.32%	+43,013	112,255	45.06%
Republican	Nick Begich III	61,431	23.34%	+1,988	64,392	24.48%	-64,392	<i>Eliminated</i>	
Libertarian	Chris Bye	4,560	1.73%	-4,560	<i>Eliminated</i>				
Write-in		1,096	0.42%	-1,096	<i>Eliminated</i>				
Total votes		263,148	100.00%		263,067	100.00%		249,148	100.00%
Inactive ballots		2,193	0.83%	+906	3,097	1.16%	+14,765	17,016	5.55%
Democratic hold									

So...What if we had RCV in Georgia in 2022?

Republican primary election

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BP There were no incumbents in this race. [Source](#)

Total votes: 45,026

- All 45k primary voters get their votes counted
- No runoff needed
- Significant savings of time and money



Voters Use Rankings

- 87% of voters in NYC's first RCV Mayoral Democratic Primary ranked multiple candidates.
- 87% of voters in Maine's first RCV statewide Democratic Primary ranked multiple candidates.
- 88% of voters in Santa Fe's first Mayoral RCV election ranked multiple candidates.



Which states have runoffs?

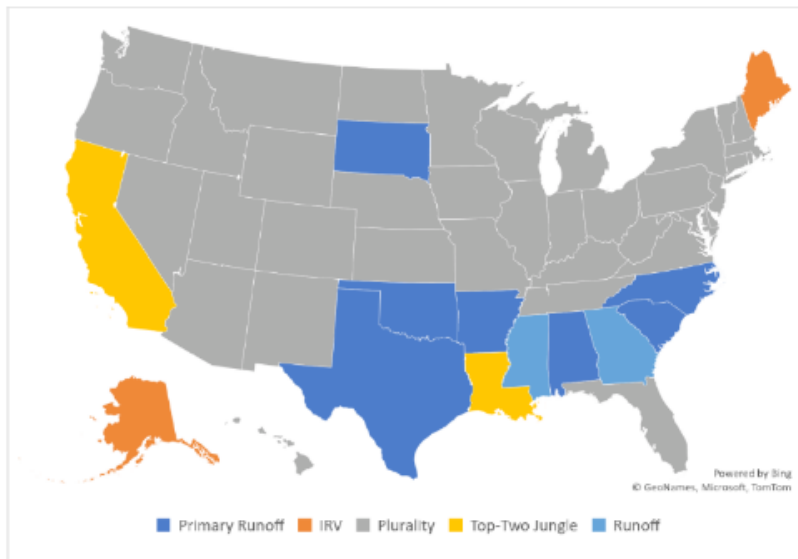


Figure 9. State Election Systems in the United States.
Source: National Council of State Legislatures and Ballotpedia.

Georgia is only one of a few states that requires runoffs in almost all races.

**50% plus one is a good thing.
But there's a better way to do it.**

Georgia SB 202 passed in 2021



- Mandates RCV for military and overseas voters in Georgia elections.
- Framed by sponsors as a way to eliminate the 9-week runoff period in federal elections

<https://www.legis.ga.gov/api/legislation/document/20212022/200015>

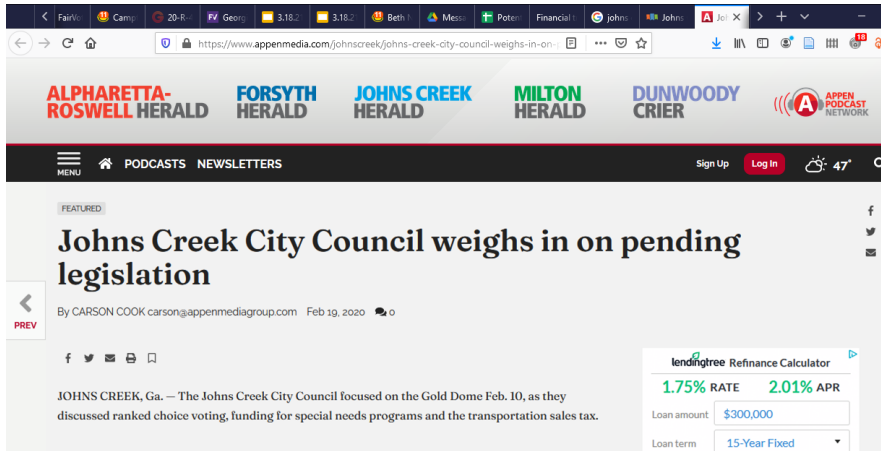
Can GA Cities and Counties Use RCV?

- RCV / RCV *does not currently conform* to Georgia voting law.
- State law requires simple plurality OR runoff elections between the top two candidates if none received > 50% of the votes.
- Georgia General Assembly *must pass legislation* to allow municipalities and counties the option to use RCV.
- House Bill 200 was dropped in the 2023 session. It gives *Georgia's cities the option* to implement RCV / RCV.



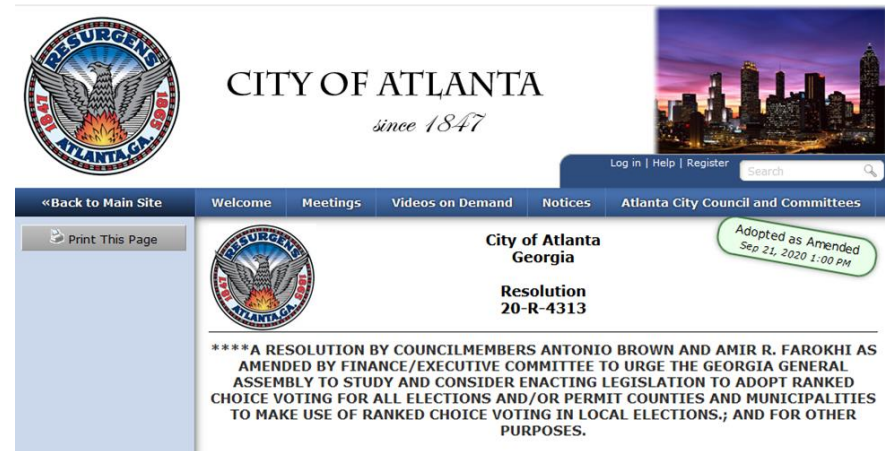
GA Municipal Resolutions already passed

Johns Creek



The screenshot shows a news article on the Appen Media website. The article is titled "Johns Creek City Council weighs in on pending legislation" and is dated February 19, 2020. The author is Carson Cook. The article text states: "JOHNS CREEK, Ga. — The Johns Creek City Council focused on the Gold Dome Feb. 10, as they discussed ranked choice voting, funding for special needs programs and the transportation sales tax." Below the article is a "lendingtree Refinance Calculator" with a 1.75% rate and 2.01% APR. The calculator shows a loan amount of \$300,000 and a 15-Year Fixed term.

City of Atlanta



The screenshot shows the City of Atlanta website. The page features the city seal and the text "CITY OF ATLANTA since 1847". A navigation menu includes "Back to Main Site", "Welcome", "Meetings", "Videos on Demand", "Notices", and "Atlanta City Council and Committees". A "Print This Page" button is visible. The main content area displays "City of Atlanta Georgia" and "Resolution 20-R-4313". A green callout box states "Adopted as Amended Sep 21, 2020 1:00 PM". The resolution text reads: "****A RESOLUTION BY COUNCILMEMBERS ANTONIO BROWN AND AMIR R. FAROKHI AS AMENDED BY FINANCE/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO URGE THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO STUDY AND CONSIDER ENACTING LEGISLATION TO ADOPT RANKED CHOICE VOTING FOR ALL ELECTIONS AND/OR PERMIT COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES TO MAKE USE OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS,; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

Our Ask Today

➤ **As a Group:**

- AAUW of GA endorses RCV concept for Georgia

➤ **Individually:**

- Sign the petition
- Volunteer
- Make financial contributions
- Spread the word!





Common Sense Solutions for a Healthy Democracy

www.BetterBallotGeorgia.org