

**Ranked choice voting gave MN voters real power on Election Day  
Two cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul. Two very different outcomes.  
One shared truth: RCV has come into its own.**

By Jeanne Massey

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Throughout this fall's campaign season, as I tabled at community events and candidate forums across Minneapolis and St. Paul, I conducted my own informal poll. I asked voters what they were thinking about the mayor's race. The answers were never uniform. In my hometown of Minneapolis, some were firmly in the "change" camp. Some were committed to Mayor Jacob Frey, others to Omar Fateh, others to neither. Many voters were blending candidates: Frey-Hampton-Davis, Fateh-Hampton-Davis, Davis-Hampton-Frey, Hampton-Frey-Davis. It was a kaleidoscope of civic expression, and it told me something important: Voters were thinking, comparing and weighing the field on their own terms.

What we saw on Election Day confirmed it. Voters claimed their power. They used ranked choice voting (RCV), and they used it well.

For more than a decade, Minneapolis and St. Paul have used RCV in competitive mayoral and council elections. But this year, RCV came fully into its own. Voters not only understand the system, they embraced it. Campaigns, too, have learned to organize and build broader voter coalitions in ways that reflect the incentives RCV is designed to create. And the results speak for themselves.

Take Minneapolis. Frey was re-elected to a third term, but not because of a narrow ideological lane. He won with more than 50% support after second-choice rankings from voters who first backed Jazz Hampton or DeWayne Davis. Under the old primary system, Hampton and Davis would never have appeared on the November ballot; their voices — and their supporters — would have been shut out. Instead, their voters helped decide the outcome by contributing directly to the coalition that carried the winning candidate across the finish line.

In St. Paul, we witnessed a different story but a similar democratic benefit. Kaohly Her, who entered the race during primary week under the old timeline, was not just allowed to compete, she was allowed to win. After placing second in the initial RCV count, she gained broad second-choice support from voters who had first chosen candidates Yan Chen, Mike Hilborn and Adam Dullinger. Without RCV, she may not have made the November ballot. Instead, the voters decided — fully and clearly — that Her should be the city's next mayor.

Two cities. Two very different outcomes. One shared truth: RCV gave voters real choice, real voice and real power.

And the voters used that power. In Minneapolis, 94.4% of ballots counted in the final RCV round. In St. Paul, it was 92.7%. These exceptionally high continuation rates reflect what voters tell us again and again: They like ranking, they find it easy and they do not want to return to a primary-general system that limits choices in November.

Turnout also hit new highs in both cities — again — under RCV, which encourages competitive campaigns throughout the fall, rather than an early August primary that too many voters miss. When the meaningful election happens in November, more people participate — and they did.

Beyond the Twin Cities, Bloomington, Minnetonka and St. Louis Park all conducted smooth RCV elections. Voters ranked confidently, results were clear and turnout was strong. And in Fort Collins, Colo., voters participated in their first RCV mayoral election with similar success, showing how quickly communities can adapt and embrace more meaningful choice.

Election administration ran smoothly across the board. Minnesota's election officials once again demonstrated the professionalism and transparency that make our state one of the most trusted in the nation. The ranked tally was fast, accurate and easy for the public to follow.

After 12 years of RCV in Minneapolis and St. Paul, the culture of campaigning and governing has changed. Candidates reach beyond their base. They seek second-choice support rather than demonizing opponents. Voters consider a full range of candidates. And communities see their voices reflected more fully in the final outcome.

This is what stronger democracy looks like.

RCV didn't cause any particular candidate to win or lose on Election Day. What it did do was ensure that the mayors elected in Minneapolis and St. Paul are the candidates who could build the broadest support across the electorate.

That is the point. That is the promise. And this year, we saw that promise fulfilled.

Ranked-choice voting has come into its own. And Minnesota has shown the nation what it looks like when democracy gives people real choice and trusts them to use it.