



ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

JOINT BILL

Bill / Resolution No.: JB - 18

Date Submitted:

Sponsor(s): Erik Bond, Assembly Secretary,  
College of Engineering; Talea Steele, Senate Vice-  
Chair, College of Cultural and Social Transform;  
Aynaelyssya Thomas, Elections Director, Executive  
Cabinet.

Date Introduced:

Date Action Taken:

**JB - A Bill to Reshape the Election Process through Ranked Choice Voting**

**WHEREAS**, in the 2025 ASUU Elections, a record-breaking 6,168 ballots were cast, making up 16% of the total student body;<sup>1,2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, conducting both primary and general elections can create confusion among students regarding when elections and voting take place;

**WHEREAS**, eliminating primary elections also saves money, time, and resources;

**WHEREAS**, general elections consisting of three candidates create the opportunity for a candidate to win the election with a minority of votes;

**WHEREAS**, the State of Utah allowed the usage of ranked-choice voting in municipal and county-wide elections in 2018 through HB 35;<sup>3</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of ranked-choice elections accelerated with the 2021 election, with 23 Utah municipalities conducting elections using a ranked-choice method;<sup>4</sup>

**WHEREAS**, adopting ranked-choice voting for ASUU elections can serve as a form of civic education for students;

**WHEREAS**, over eighty (80) colleges and universities in the United States use a method of ranked-choice voting to conduct student elections, including peer schools in the Association of American Universities (AAU), Pac-12, and Big-10:

- Arizona State University-Tempe (formerly Pac-12)

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- Boston University (AAU)
  - In Spring 2020, BU’s student government adopted proportional RCV to give students more power in electing executive board positions. Boston University is home to 37,557 students, approximately the same size as the University of Utah.<sup>2,5</sup>
- California Institute of Technology (AAU)
- Carnegie Mellon University (AAU)
- Columbia University (AAU)
- Cornell University (AAU)
- Duke University (AAU)
  - In 2017, Duke had a higher turnout rate for campus elections than any other peer institution.
- Harvard University (AAU)north
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (AAU)
- Northwestern University (AAU, Big 10)
- Oregon State University (Pac-12)
  - In Oregon State’s first election using RCV, turnout was 62% higher than in the previous election.
- Princeton University (AAU)
  - In 2019, Princeton’s Senate adopted RCV for the election of all executive and class officers. Since then, turnout has increased by more than 15% for elections
- Purdue University (AAU, Big 10)
- Rice University (AAU)
  - With over 6,000 students, Rice elects a student president for each of its 10 colleges. One recent ranked-choice election for president featured six candidates.
- Stanford University (AAU, formerly Pac-12)
  - Stanford’s ranked choice voting system has seen remarkable success in engaging students, with over 20% of the student body engaging in some elections over the past decade.
- Texas A&M University (AAU)
  - Ranked-Choice Voting has been used for elections at Texas A&M, which has the fourth largest student body in the United States, since 2013
- Tufts University (AAU)
- University of California at Berkeley (AAU, formerly Pac-12)
  - U.C. Berkeley’s student government has had forms of Ranked-Choice Voting since 1967
- University of California at Davis (AAU)
- University of California at Los Angeles (AAU, formerly Pac-12, Big 10 (as of 2024))
  - Once ranked-choice voting was implemented in UCLA’s Undergraduate and Graduate Students Associations in 2014, turnout dramatically increased among the campus’s 42,000 students.
- University of California at San Diego (AAU)
- University of California at Santa Barbara (AAU)
- University of California at Santa Cruz (AAU)
- University of Iowa (AAU, Big 10)
  - The University of Iowa has used RCV since 2008 to elect its student government president, vice president, and senators. In the first RCV election, voter turnout jumped to record-breaking levels.
- University of Michigan (AAU, Big 10)
- University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (AAU, Big 10)

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- University of North Carolina (AAU)
- University of Texas at Austin (AAU)
  - After a series of low-turnout, high-drama runoffs, UT-Austin’s student government signed off in 2018 on a switch to proportional RCV.
- University of Virginia (AAU)
- University of Washington (AAU, Pac-12)
- Utah Valley University (Utah System of Higher Education Institution)
- Vanderbilt University (AAU)

**WHEREAS**, the University of Utah Student Affairs Department of Assessment and Analytics can facilitate a ranked-choice election through a combination of Qualtrics and Python code;

**WHEREAS**, this process can be facilitated without manual student input, nearly eliminating the likelihood of any errors or miscounts in the tallying of election results;

**THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED**, AMEND **Redbook Constitution**, Article II, Section 1, Line 4 to read:

4. In all elections, the candidate(s) who receives the most points on a ranked-choice ballot shall win the election.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ENACTED**, AMEND **Redbook Bylaws**, Article V, Section 1 to read as follows, after the approval of the proposed Constitutional amendment by student referendum:

1. “Campaigning” shall be defined as all operations and actions that are both meant to advance the electoral interests of a registered candidate or political party; and directed by, coordinated with, encouraged by, or undertaken with the consent of the same candidate or political party.

1.1. All actions taken by candidates in relation to an election, including but not limited to discussing the elections process, shall be considered campaigning.

1.2. Campaigning does not include approaching potential running mates or Core Committee members.

1.2.1. A “Core Committee” shall be defined by the Elections Registrar.

1.3. Campaigning does not include discussing elections-related operations or actions with running mates or Core Committee members.

1.4. Campaigning does not include operations or actions undertaken with the consent of ASUU Professional Staff, the Elections Registrar, or other Elections Officials as determined by the Elections Registrar.

2. A “political party” shall be defined as a group of three students who are registered in the same election as candidates for the President, Vice President of University Relations, and Vice President of Student Relations, and their Core Committee.
3. A “campaign expenditure” shall be defined as all money that is used to advance the electoral interests of a candidate or political party.
- ~~4. A “Primary Election” shall be defined as a preliminary election held to narrow a candidate pool to three (3) candidates per seat. Primary Elections shall be held prior to a General Election in any election in which more than three (3) candidates are running.~~
- 5.4. A “General Election” shall be defined as an election in which a single candidate or political party is selected as a winner, in accordance with the Constitution.
- ~~6.5. A “campaign cycle” shall be defined as the period during which Primary (if necessary) and General Elections take place.~~
6. A “ranked-choice ballot” shall be defined as a ballot that allows voters to select at least three candidates and up to the number of possible winners, plus two for each office on the ballot, after which election results will be calculated according to a ranked-choice, positional voting procedure.
7. A “ranked-choice, positional voting procedure” shall be defined as the method for calculating election results in accordance with Section 6.

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, AMEND Redbook Bylaws, Article V, Section 2 to read as follows, after the approval of the proposed Constitutional amendment by student referendum:**

#### 1. Filing Deadline

- 1.1. The filing deadline must be before February 1st.
- 1.2. Once established and announced by the Elections Registrar, the Elections Registrar may not change the filing deadline unless the Supreme Court approves the change.

#### 2. Campaigning Timeline

- 2.1. The entirety of the election must take place within a maximum of four (4) calendar weeks during spring semester.
- 2.2. The election can take place at any time in spring semester as long as final General Election voting concludes before February 28th.
  - 2.2.1. In extenuating circumstances as determined by a majority vote of the Supreme Court, final General Election voting may conclude before March 7th instead of February 28th.

### 3. Campaigning Begins

~~3.1. In the event of a Primary Election, Primary campaigning will take place over the first two (2) weeks of the four (4) week period.~~

~~3.1.1. The only candidates that will be allowed to campaign for the Primary Election are the candidates who are filed for a position that has at least three other candidates filed for the same position.~~

### 4. Posting Day

4.1. The date on which candidates are permitted to begin campaigning and post all campaign materials shall be named "Posting Day."

4.2. Posting Day will be the first Friday of the four (4) week campaign cycle.

### ~~5. Primary Election~~

~~5.1. The Elections Registrar will determine if it is necessary to hold a Primary Election no later than two (2) weeks before the Primary Election would take place.~~

~~5.2. The Primary Election will end no later than one week before the General Election, with the announcement of the candidates that will be on the ballot for the General Election announced on the Friday of the same week.~~

### ~~6.5. General Election~~

~~6.1. Voting for the General Election must be open for no fewer than four (4) days.~~

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, AMEND Redbook Bylaws, Article V, to create Section 6 titled "Ranked-Choice Method" to read:**

1. Elections will adhere to a ranked-choice, positional voting procedure in which voters rank candidates on the ballot. Rank positions will correspond to integer point values, and the candidate(s) with the most points will win the election.

2. The procedure for marking a ballot will be as follows:

2.1. For single-winner offices, voters will select up to three candidates and rank them according to preference.

2.2. For multiple-winner offices, voters will select up to the number of possible winners plus two candidates and rank them according to preference.

2.3. Ballots will only allow for integer ranking.

2.4. Ballots will not allow for voters to select more than the number of possible winners plus two candidates for any given office.

3. The procedure for summing points will be as follows:

3.1. Integer point values are assigned to ordinal rank positions in descending order, starting from the maximum point value. The maximum point value equals the maximum number of selections.

3.1.1. In a single-winner election, a first-choice rank is assigned three points, a second-choice rank is assigned two points, and a third-choice rank is assigned one point. Any unranked candidate will be assigned zero points on that ballot.

3.1.2. In a multiple-winner election, a first-choice rank is assigned the point value equal to the number of possible winners plus two. Integer point values are assigned to the remaining rank positions in descending order.

3.2. All the point values assigned to each candidate will be summed. Ordinal rank positions will not be additionally weighted.

3.3. The candidate(s) with the most points will win the election.

4. The ranked-choice, positional voting procedure does not mean an instant-runoff voting procedure, a single transferable voting procedure, an approval voting procedure, a score voting procedure, a plurality voting procedure, or a first-past-the-post voting procedure.

## **Citations:**

1. Thomas, Aynaelyssya. “2025 ASUU General Election Results.” *ASUU General Ballot - Live Results*, ASUU, 28 Feb. 2025, [www.asuu.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/02/2023-ASUU-General-Election-Results-1.pdf](http://www.asuu.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/02/2023-ASUU-General-Election-Results-1.pdf).
2. “Facts and Figures.” *Facts and Figures*, University of Utah, [brand.utah.edu/facts-and-figures/#:~:text=Enrollment%20as%20of%20Fall%202024,8%2C830%20graduate%20students](http://brand.utah.edu/facts-and-figures/#:~:text=Enrollment%20as%20of%20Fall%202024,8%2C830%20graduate%20students). Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.
3. Roberts, Marc K., and Howard A. Stephenson. “MUNICIPAL ALTERNATE VOTING METHODS PILOT PROJECT.” *HB0035*, Utah State Legislature, 8 May 2018, [le.utah.gov/~2018/bills/static/HB0035.html](http://le.utah.gov/~2018/bills/static/HB0035.html).
4. Geraty, Meara. “23 Cities to Use Ranked Choice Voting in Utah This Year.” *RepresentUs*, 2021, [act.represent.us/sign/23-cities-use-ranked-choice-voting-utah-year](http://act.represent.us/sign/23-cities-use-ranked-choice-voting-utah-year).
5. “Bu Facts & Stats.” *BU Facts & Stats | Office of the President*, [www.bu.edu/president/boston-university-facts-stats/](http://www.bu.edu/president/boston-university-facts-stats/). Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.