**Title**
Alaska's New Electoral System: Countering Polarization or "Crooked as Hell"?

**Permalink**
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5k75w7xw

**Journal**
California Journal of Politics and Policy, 15(1)

**Authors**
Reilly, Benjamin
Lublin, David
Wright, Glenn

**Publication Date**
2023

**DOI**
10.5070/P2cjpp15160081

Peer reviewed

# Alaska's New Electoral System: Countering Polarization or "Crooked as Hell"?

Benjamin Reilly
East-West Center
reillyb@eastwestcenter.org

David Lublin
American University
dlublin@american.edu

Glenn Wright
University of Alaska Southeast
gdwright@alaska.edu

## Abstract

In November 2020, Alaska introduced a new electoral system, combining a "top four" all-party primary with ranked choice voting (RCV) general elections. Supporters of this reform claimed it would reduce the partisan polarization and minority victories generated by closed primaries and plurality elections. But critics suggest that it could make polarization worse by weakening political parties—an important check on political extremism. These are high-stakes issues that go well beyond Alaska, given the problem of political polarization and the search for institutional reforms in America today. Placing the Alaskan reforms in this broader national context, this paper presents an initial assessment of Alaska's new system at the 2022 primary and mid-term elections. We find the reform was both consequential and largely beneficial, promoting greater choice for voters, more accommodative campaigning, and generally more moderate outcomes than likely under the old rules.

## Introduction

In November 2020, Alaskans approved by ballot referendum a new way of conducting their elections. Dispensing with the closed party primaries and plurality general elections used in most of the U.S., Alaska adopted a system of nonpartisan top-four primaries[1] and ranked choice general elections. In so doing, many Alaskans believe themselves to be demonstrating a plausible alternative to failing political institutions in the Lower 48.[2]

The new rules involve a two-stage election process for all state and federal offices: a single, blanket primary among candidates of all parties, the top four of whom advance to a general election decided by ranked choice voting (RCV). In the first stage, voters choose a single candidate from an aggregated list of Democratic, Republican, third-party, and independent candidates, with the top four continuing to the general election. Alaskans have taken to calling this top four model –a "tundra primary" rather than a "jungle primary".

---

[1] These are not primaries in the traditional sense of selecting party nominees but are better thought of as a preliminary or first-round election. Nevertheless, we use the term here as it is also widely used to refer to similar first-round elections that may result in multiple candidates from the same party moving on to the general election (e.g. California and Louisiana).

[2] Despite national media's occasional representation of Alaska as a frozen backwater, residents of the self-described "last frontier", whose state motto is "North to the Future", have a long history of policy leadership on issues like school desegregation (Alaska began desegregation in 1929), marijuana legalization (since 1978), and the right to privacy (recognized in the state constitution in 1959).

In the subsequent RCV general election, voters rank their preferences. Winning candidates must gain an absolute majority (not just plurality) of votes in the contest; if no candidate earns a majority of voters' first choice votes, the least popular candidate is eliminated and that candidate's supporters' votes are redistributed to their next choice on the ballot. If a ballot to be redistributed lacks further rankings, it becomes inactive and excluded from the count. The process continues until the winning candidate receives a majority among active ballots, which can be less than a majority of all valid ballots if enough voters opt not to rank all candidates.

Advocates of this system argue that RCV will generate more moderate results because of the requirement that victors receive a majority of votes; rather than winning with a relatively narrow plurality, candidates are incentivized to pursue a median voter strategy and therefore more centrist positioning. Freeing candidates from the necessity of winning party primaries plays a crucial role in facilitating these efforts. Supporters also suggest that campaigning will be more accommodative and civil; negative campaigning will tend to alienate voters who might otherwise be willing to support candidates as a second or third choice. Alaskan activists also suggested this model better reflects the preferences of independent-minded Alaskan voters: voters can vote their conscience without worries about "wasting" their ballot on third-party candidates.

However, the new system has also been criticized by some politicians, scholars, and policymakers. In a familiar flourish, Donald Trump called it "crooked as hell", while Sarah Palin derided the new rules as "whack" and "cockamamie." [3] More coherently, some worried that Alaska's new system could weaken political parties which, at least in theory, provide a check against extremism by seeking to promote more moderate candidates with a greater chance of winning in a general election. According to this argument, Alaska's new election system might increase rather than decrease ideological polarization by reducing the role of relatively moderate, victory-oriented party elites in party nominating contests. [4] We find this implausible, as candidate-driven primaries long ago overwhelmed most efforts by parties or party leaders to control election outcomes, but evidence that Alaska's system resulted in more polarization would provide strong support for this theory.

Who is right? This is a high-stakes issue with implications well beyond Alaska, given the extreme levels of political polarization and systemic dysfunction in the United States today. Placing the reforms in this broader national context, this article represents an initial assessment of the new Alaskan system. We begin by examining the problem of political polarization and its connection to closed party primaries and plurality elections. We then examine the genesis of the Alaskan reforms and the expectations, assumptions, and preconditions for their functioning, before analyzing the system's first use to elect Alaska's four statewide offices in the 2022 primary, special, and general elections. We conclude with an initial assessment of the impact of the new rules on political practice, behavior, and outcomes.

---

[3] Anchorage Daily News. 2022. "Alaska Voters Weigh a New System as First Ranked Choice Election Approaches." July 14.

[4] See Ballotpedia. 2020. "Alaska Ballot Measure 2, Top-Four Ranked-Choice Voting and Campaign Finance Laws Initiative." https://ballotpedia.org/Alaska_Ballot_Measure_2,_Top-Four_Ranked-Choice_Voting_and_Campaign_Finance_Laws_Initiative_(2020).

## The Polarization Problem

Partisan allegiances have taken on an identity-like status for many Americans (Mason 2018). Opinions polls routinely find Democratic and Republican voters hold sharply negative views of the other side. Questions that have long been used by researchers of race and ethnicity (such as "would you be comfortable with your son or daughter being in a mixed relationship?"), are now registering similar levels of social anxiety for party ID to those once reserved for the idea of interracial marriage (McCoy and Press 2022). In an age of hard-line partisanship, with fewer floating voters than in the past, elections are less a battle of ideas and more a statement of identity, with divisions being exploited openly and explicitly. Campaigns promoting us-versus-them divisions have become an effective way to mobilize voters, and easier to instigate than those based on compromise, deliberation, and restraint (Bartels 2020).

America's distinctive institutional framework for elections and representation has also become a driver of polarization. Geographic sorting combined with partisan and racial redistricting has eliminated many competitive districts, rendering the party primary the crucial contest and the general election an afterthought in most districts (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2006; Pew 2014; Drutman 2021; Wasserman 2021). Ideological sorting, spurred along by primaries and redistricting (Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Lublin 2007), has rendered parties and their primaries more ideologically homogenous and extreme. Some scholars additionally argue that primaries, usually low-turnout affairs, attract the most ideologically committed partisans (Fiorina and Abrams 2011; Mann 2007; Pew 2014; Polsby 1983), creating incentives for incumbents to shift toward ideological extremes to pre-empt primary challenges. But recent research indicates that primary electorates resemble the party rank and file well, and that electorates in primaries open to unaffiliated or all voters (i.e. open primaries) are no more moderate than those open only to voters registered with the party (i.e. closed primaries) (Sides et al. 2021).

The plurality electoral rules used in most primary and general elections further empower the more militant segment of a party's base. The 2022 primary races around the country saw numerous high-profile candidates from the Republican far-right win with a minority of the vote. Mehmet Oz, J.D. Vance, and Blake Masters won Republican Senate primaries in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Arizona, respectively, with just 31, 32, and 39 percent of the vote. In Nebraska, Jim Pillen similarly clinched the Republican gubernatorial nomination with only 34 percent of the vote.

All of this tends to sideline more moderate voices in the party and the electorate at large, instead privileging a motivated and relatively extreme "selectorate" – the much smaller group of party members who participate in primaries and select the nominee. Come the general election, hardline partisanship makes outcomes highly predictable in most congressional districts that lean towards one party. This process is replicated in state legislatures as well as Congress.

The result has been growing polarization, with both parties shifting further towards their flanks, limiting their capacity for convergence in Congress. The nationalization of American politics also undercuts the ability of candidates to win general elections outside areas won by their party's presidential nominee (Jacobson 2015, Bartels 2016), reducing the very actors most likely to moderate and facilitate compromises within Congress and state legislatures. Politicians supported by a cross-section of the electorate should be more likely to engage in the kind of legislative compromise, policy cake-cutting, and general give-and-take need to make democracy work, especially under America's separation of powers political structure. Instead, legislators willing to cut deals with opponents have increasingly declined to run for reelection because of pressure from extremists within their own parties.

Given these problems of closed party primaries and plurality general elections, changing the rules of the game to address polarization and offer a *centripetal* (Horowitz 1985, Reilly 2001) counterweight to the centrifugal forces of residential sorting, divisive mobilization, and negative partisanship has become widely advocated by political scientists, public intellectuals, and national commentators (Mann and Ornstein 2012; Diamond 2015; Dionne, Ornstein and Mann 2018; Slaughter, Fukuyama and Diamond 2019; Drutman 2020; Fukuyama 2022).

Experiments by some cities in California and elsewhere with ranked choice voting (RCV) offers one example, potentially encouraging candidates to broaden their support to gain a majority. Controlled studies of RCV in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and St. Paul identified examples of joint campaigns and greater civility than equivalent contests held under plurality rules (Donovan, Tolbert and Gracey 2016). Other research from the Bay Area suggests that ranked voting may be potentially confusing for minority voters (McDaniel 2018), but can also encourage more women and minorities to contest elections, in part due to the more cooperative campaign environment the system offers (John, Smith and Zack 2018).

The top-two primary used in California (and Washington State) is also, in theory, centripetal (Sinclair 2015; Nagler 2015; Reilly 2018). Unlike conventional party primaries, it requires all candidates to compete in a first round, with the best-supported two moving on to the general election—even if one candidate gains a first-round majority or both are from the same party. But besides being vulnerable to quirky outcomes that can leave voters with one (or even two) unpalatable choices, studies are mixed on whether the top-two system promotes less polarized and more responsible officials. McGhee and Shor (2017) find little evidence of changed behaviour, whereas Grose (2020) argues that new legislators elected under the system are more moderate than the incumbents they replace (see also Alvarez and Sinclair 2015; Kousser 2015).

## The Alaskan Reforms

In 2020, Alaskans approved Ballot Measure 2 by a narrow margin (50.55% in support). Measure 2 included three elements: a campaign finance reform (including a vague ban on "dark money"), a new primary system, and a reformed system for general elections.

The genesis of the reform package lay not only in experiments like California's but more directly in a widely-promoted reform manifesto (Gehl and Porter 2017) which argued for replacing closed party primaries with open nonpartisan contests, with the top-four finishers regardless of party going on to compete in a majority (not plurality) winner general election conducted under ranked choice voting. These ideas were picked up by reformers in Alaska, who created a lobby group, Alaskans for Better Elections, and promoted a top-four non-partisan primary as the best means to increase political cooperation in the face of escalating and incapacitating partisanship and polarization in state politics.[5]

Replacing plurality general elections with ranked choice voting was the other key element of the reform. Under the single-member version of RCV used both internationally (e.g. in Australia) and also in the United States (e.g. for federal elections in Maine, and mayoral elections in some 17 cities including San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Fe, Minneapolis, and now New York City), voters are invited to rank-order candidates, with an absolute majority required to win a single-member district – either outright or after rankings are counted, if no candidate has a majority on first choice votes alone.

---

[5] Interview, Scott Kendall and Jason Grenn, Alaskans for Better Elections, October 21, 2021.

In competitive races where outcomes are uncertain, this means that in addition to turning out their base, candidates have an incentive to gain rankings from supporters of other candidates. If the support gained by so doing can be balanced against the pull of party activists and hardliners, electoral rewards should accrue to those who occupy the political center. The prospects of such moderation-inducing incentives has seen RCV advocated for divided societies by some scholars (Horowitz 1985, 1991; Reilly 2001, 2016) and more recently by those concerned about U.S. democracy, particularly in the wake the Trump presidency (Weiser, Richie and Levinson 2016; Diamond 2017; Kleinfeld 2021; McCoy and Press 2022; Drutman and Strano 2021).

In Alaska, attorney Scott Kendall served as the front man for the reform effort. Kendall is a prominent member of Alaska's political establishment who has had a history of working with moderates including Sen. Lisa Murkowski. By his own account, Kendall was impressed by Gehl's efforts to promote ranked choice voting and all-party primaries in other states and sought to bring these reforms home to Alaska (Kendall and La queen náay 2021). Ranked choice and an all-party primary would, advocates hoped, shift the incentive structure of Alaskan politics and encourage more moderate, consensual politics and bipartisanship. Kendall and other Alaskan activists argued that the proposed election system would generate more sensible policy, less negative campaigning, and help surmount the "spoiler" effect of third-party candidates creating minority victories seen widely in U.S. elections (including Alaska).

This last point was particularly salient for many political observers because of the dynamics of Alaska's 2018 gubernatorial election. In 2018—the election prior to the passage of the reform—incumbent independent Gov. Bill Walker ran against Democrat Mark Begich and Republican Michael Dunleavy. Though Walker withdrew from the race days before the election as a result of a sex scandal associated with his running mate, many observers believed that Walker would have won re-election in a two-way race. The Alaskans for Better Elections proposal to introduce RCV was seen by many as a way to avoid another election in which moderate candidates (like Begich and Walker) might split the vote and be defeated by a candidate with minority support.

Also notable, Alaska's proposed reform included language banning "dark money." This was no doubt helpful in squeaking out a very narrow 50.55% victory for Ballot Measure 2 in 2020 making the reform the first major change in Alaskan elections in many years. The reform faced no real organized opposition, though some spoke out against the proposed new system including former Republican governor Sean Parnell and former Democratic U.S. Senator Mark Begich (Begich and Parnell 2020).

Opponents argued that the proposed system would have undesirable impacts on Alaska's political parties and that the system would be too complicated for Alaskans to understand. Some scholarly critics also opposed the change, arguing that the idea promoting centrist politics relies on simplistic median voter models which elide the complexity and multi-dimensionality of contemporary American politics (Santucci 2021). But even in a multi-dimensional policy space featuring voters and activists with competing preferences or ideologies, a vote-maximizing equilibrium position exists.[6] In the language of game theory,

---

[6] To quote Miller and Schofield (2008: 441): "given voters and activists with different preferences in a multi-dimensional policy space, there exists a Pure Strategy Nash Equilibrium (or PSNE) for vote-maximizing candidates. This simply means that, at any given time, each party candidate adopts a policy position to balance

RCV offers the potential for a positive-sum game: a candidate can benefit from ballots cast initially for someone else, if those votes return to her in the form of second or later rankings. Over time, this can encourage the formation of pre-electoral coalitions, resulting in potentially enduring "coalitions of commitment" in government (Horowitz 1985, 365-95). There is evidence of both practices occurring under the century-long use of RCV in Australia, via both formal and informal pre-election coalitions underpinned by ranking exchanges (Sharman, Sayers and Miragliotta 2002). Whether such deal-making and coalition formation can occur in the more polarized context of the United States is a key question.

The advent of RCV for full-blooded partisan contests in Maine since 2018 and now Alaska is thus a crucial test. In both states, it was voters, not politicians, who imposed RCV on reluctant state legislatures through a series of ballot propositions. Support from sitting politicians was lukewarm at best. Activists were motivated by several factors. A succession of minority-supported governors – 8 of the last 12 in Alaska and 9 of the last 11 in Maine – have been elected under plurality rules, while political polarization has also grown. State legislatures have also become less functional, particularly in Alaska which had relied on cross-party governing coalitions.

## Assumptions and Preconditions

Before examining the Alaskan case, it is worth pausing to consider the assumptions on which these ideas rest. Incentives to encourage centrist movement depend on electors being willing to rank candidates in their order of choice on the ballot, with the assumption that aggregation of such rankings should inhibit extremist victories because the need to assemble a majority coalition entails reaching out to the center. But neither outcome is assured: voters may not mark any rankings as a matter of choice or encouragement – and a candidate confident of winning on first-preference votes alone has little incentive to seek votes elsewhere. Similarly, aggregation of votes could in theory benefit the extremes, not just the center – particularly in highly polarized settings with multiple parties or candidates competing at the fringes, where the political center has been abandoned by most voters.

The model is also dependent on facilitating social and demographic conditions (Horowitz 1991, 188-203; Reilly 2001, 167-93; McCulloch 2013, 111-32). Most fundamentally, it requires a degree of pluralism and competition: preferential voting can only be conducive to moderation and coalition formation if multiple ideological options are vying for election. Logically, this means a minimum of three or more viable candidates competing for office. In a duopoly with only two candidates – a not uncommon scenario in U.S. elections – the question of rankings and transfers becomes irrelevant. With three or more viable candidates, the outcomes of at least some elections held under RCV should turn on the second and third preferences of voters whose first choice was for an excluded candidate.

Both of these conditions were satisfied in most of Alaska's 2022 races. Though—as is common with state elections in other places—a number of legislative contests were uncontested, most races (including all Alaska's statewide races) featured three or more candidates, and twelve races state-wide, including both the US House and US Senate races, hinged on voters' second choices. Additionally, as in Australia, third parties should earn more votes, if not seats, given RCV greatly reduces the incentives for strategic voting in order to

---

the centrifugal pull of party activists with the centripetal pull of the electorate, while also seeking a best response to the position adopted by the other party's candidate."

avoid a spoiler effect – an important factor given Alaska's fluid party system, discussed below.

However, in most of the United States, the two established political parties dominate electoral competition. Indeed, the U.S. has a more complete two-party system than almost any other democracy, buttressed by numerous institutional barriers to third parties – and there is little reason to expect RCV by itself to change this (Santucci 2021, 349). This is where the "tundra primary" Alaskan top-four system becomes important: mathematically, any candidate who can win over a fifth of the vote goes on to election day, regardless of their party affiliation, offering more options to voters than California and Washington's top-two primaries. Historically, America's two major parties were big tents encompassing a wider range of policy viewpoints than today's comparatively homogeneous parties, so perhaps top-four may facilitate the re-emergence of this diversity.

Some worry that these rules erode parties' associational rights by ending their control over nominations and policy positions (Feinstein 2020; Shugart 2020; Santucci 2021). But party control over nominations in the traditional sense ended with the advent of party primaries, as registration with a party is the maximal price of admission. Unlike Australia or the UK, American parties in the vast majority of states have for years had little say or veto over legislative nominations in a highly candidate-driven process. Alaskan parties, like those in most other states, have historically been unable to control their own nomination process.

A third facilitating condition for such reforms to be effective is a genuinely competitive election with an uncertain outcome. Democracy is often thought of as a form of "organized uncertainty" (Przeworski 1991), with the results of competitive elections unknown in advance. Increasingly, however, this does not describe most partisan American elections. For the 2022 U.S. House elections, the venerable Cook Political Report rated only 32 districts as toss ups with an additional 26 as leaning to a party – just 13.3 percent of the House. Nate Silver's respected FiveThirtyEight estimated that just 10 districts are true toss ups with an additional 27 as leaning to a party – only 8.5 percent of the House.

A final facilitating condition is a degree of moderate sentiment existing in the electorate at large. The core of the centripetal approach is the need to make politicians dependent on a broader pool of votes than just their core supporters, but this assumes that there are enough floating voters prepared to offer a second or third ranking beyond their own core party or candidate. If there is no political room for appeals to other interests, RCV cannot promote moderate sentiments that do not, in fact, exist. Some such as Drutman (2021, 7) see this as a key problem for American reformers: "there is not some latent fifth column of sensible moderate voters reluctantly waiting in the wings. The vast majority of voters have sorted into the two teams on offer." But Drutman also contends that America really has a four-party system compressed into two-party system, which may mitigate institutional barriers. Others also argue that most voters are in fact far more moderate and centrist than national politics would suggest (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2006).

Our institutional analysis suggests that to the extent that the current system incentivizes growing polarization rather than moderation, hardline partisanship may be partly a result of the polarized choices on offer. At the same time, there is real variation within each party, and when voters have the opportunity they often demonstrate a willingness to vote for centrist minority party candidates for prominent offices. This suggests not only that partisanship may be less baked in than regularly assumed, but also that there are opportunities for candidates from different party factions if they can make it to the general election ballot.

## The Alaskan Context

Alaska – perhaps more than any other state – appears to meet the preconditions discussed above, despite its generally strong partisan lean towards Republicans in federal elections. In contrast to the two-party duopoly in most of the United States, Alaska has an unusually fluid party system, with the Alaska Independence Party and non-aligned Independents regularly winning office in addition to Republicans and Democrats. These results are consequential for governing: a Democratic-Independent-Republican coalition controlled the State House between 2018 and 2022. A Republican-Independent coalition that excludes the most extreme Republicans emerged in early 2023. While the state typically sends Republicans to Washington, those Republicans tend to be of a more independent vein, such as Sen. Lisa Murkowski – who has a history of cross-aisle centrism including voting to impeach Donald Trump after Jan. 6 – or Rep. Don Young, whose death in February 2022 sparked the August special election discussed below.

Alaska is also ethnically heterogenous, ranking as one of the most diverse U.S. states on most measures. It tops the list for the proportion of Native Americans, primarily Alaska Natives, at almost 20 percent of the population, and is also home to nearly half of the country's 574 federally-recognized Native tribes. However, non-Hispanic whites are a clear statewide majority with 60 percent of the population. Alaska Natives form a majority of voters in only four of 40 State House districts, though substantial minorities of voters in many more.[7]

The combination of partisan and ethnic diversity makes for an unusually fragmented electorate in both political and demographic terms – a condition that facilitates centripetal reform. About 30 percent of Alaska voters register as Republicans, around 15 percent are Democrats, and the remainder (a majority) overwhelmingly as "Undecided" or "Nonpartisan", with a small percentage of third-party voters. Alaska's previous use of semi-open primaries in which unaffiliated voters could participate reflects this lack of strong partisan attachment. This speaks to the final centripetal precondition: moderation. Alaska has a long history of moderate political pragmatism under legislators like Lisa Murkowski, Don Young, and Sen. Ted Stevens. It also has a history of cross-party governance including under bipartisan executives like Bill Egan, Jay Hammond, and Bill Walker. The national media's frequent portrayal of Alaska as a red state understates these moderating and cross-partisan elements of state politics.

All of this makes Alaska appear unusually well-suited to centripetal reforms. It also means that Alaska functions as something of a crucial case for assessing the wider potential of 'Top 4-RCV': if it does not work where conditions are favorable, it is unlikely to be more successful elsewhere. For the same reason, its suitability also makes Alaska a good test of some of the criticisms of the model, such as the concern that it enhances intraparty competition and therefore weakens political parties. Simply put, if problems are inherent to the model, as some have argued, we should see them on full display in the Alaskan context.

Prior to the adoption of the new system, Alaska had a more conventional electoral system: both major parties held semi-open primaries that were open to their partisans as well as nonpartisan and undeclared voters. Following a practice unique to Alaska, the Democratic, Libertarian and Alaskan Independence parties held their primaries on the same ballot, though

---

[7] This statistic is based on the 2021 Alaska Redistricting Board's final report, itself based on the 2020 U.S. Census, and may not reflect demographics in the several election cycles prior to 2020. See Binkley et al. 2021.

the winning candidate from each party moved to the general election. Pluralities determined the winners of party nominations as well as the general election. [8]

The new system replaced party primaries with an open contest for all candidates, partisans and independents alike, for Alaska's federal, gubernatorial, and state legislative elections. Any eligible candidate could stand with their party affiliation identified on the ballot. Multiple nominees from the same party could run in the primaries, with their fate in the hands of all electors, not just primary voters. Accordingly, it was expected that third parties or independents would in many cases be able to claim a place on the general election ballot (Reilly, Lublin and Leven 2021).

In Alaska, the most immediate beneficiaries of the change were moderate Republicans such as U.S. Senate incumbent Lisa Murkowski and former state Senate President Cathy Giessel, both of whom faced Trump-endorsed hardliners in their primaries. Under the new top-four model, each immediately became less liable to being primaried out of contention for the general election. Murkowski was seen as the clearest winner from the new system, to the point that some saw her as being behind the reforms from the outset.[9] Giessel announced her comeback bid in late 2021 after having lost her 2020 primary to a more extreme Republican, saying she, "intends to campaign as someone who can work across party boundaries" and form new coalitions in the general elections.[10] She believed that the new election system created an opening for her to challenge the conservative Roger Holland, correctly perceiving that her relatively moderate district would prefer her to Holland now that the system allows more than one Republican to advance to the general election. In the end, Giessel won in the second round; she received about the same number of first choice votes as Holland but many more second choice votes when third place finisher Roslynn Cacy, a Democrat, was eliminated.

Conversely, hardliners who had benefitted from the old system found themselves under challenge by more moderate co-partisans who would have lost in a closed primary. One such example was the race for Senate district D, on the conservative Kenai Peninsula South of Anchorage. There, long time conservative activist Tuckerman Babcock faced a relatively moderate competitor, Jesse Bjorkman. Babcock would have almost certainly prevailed in a traditional partisan primary but was ultimately defeated by the relatively more moderate Bjorkman, who advanced to the general as one of three competitors and who received a majority with the help of second choice votes from supporters of Independent Andy Cizek. Nevertheless, many relatively extreme candidates who enjoyed wide support in their very conservative districts did quite well under the new rules. [11]

The voting rule for the primaries was also significant. A single-choice, multi-winner primary is effectively a single non-transferable vote, a system which has been much studied internationally (Cox 1996; Grofman 1999), where it often allowed candidates with as little as 10 percent support, or even less, to win a slot under similar rules to Alaska's (Lin 2006).

---

[8] Democrats changed their rules in 2020 to permit non-Democrats to win their party's nomination as part of a potential (but ultimately unrealized) bid to nominate incumbent independent Gov. Bill Walker.

[9] Anchorage Daily News. 2022. "Alaska Voters Weigh a New System as First Ranked Choice Election Approaches." July 14.

[10] See Anchorage Daily News. 2021. "Former Anchorage Sen. Cathy Giessel, Defeated in 2020, Will Run Again in 2022." December 2.

[11] Such as David Eastman, a member of the Oath Keepers, who faced a challenge from two other Republicans.

Such studies concluded the system offers political parties two contrasting strategies: smaller parties should coordinate behind a single candidate, while large parties should put forward multiple candidates to appeal to different factions – but not so many as to risk splitting the vote and losing potentially winnable spots.

Given the clear divisions between traditional and insurgent wings in both contemporary parties, it was unsurprising to see multiple candidates from each party standing for each of the 2022 statewide Alaskan contests. Critics (e.g. Santucci 2022: 174) saw this as undermining the strength of the party brand, diluting the classic roles of political parties as organizations that nominate candidates, bundle policies, structure collective outcomes and offer cues to voters (e.g. Aldrich 1995). For advocates, however, this model has the potential to generate 'substitute' challengers which could open the door to new entrants and weaken the cozy two-party duopoly of the 'politics industry' (Gehl and Porter 2017: 28-9). Under the increasingly ideologically cohesive and disciplined parties that characterize the current era, many voters may prefer a candidate from another party rather than a candidate from their own party.  RCV provides partisan voters a way to vote for a candidate of another party, or a non-establishment candidate in their own party, before ranking the party's anointed nominee (Brennan and Lomasky 1993).

## Alaska's 2022 Elections

Initially, Alaskans thought they would get their first taste of the new system in the fall of 2022, with the open primary in August and a general election in November. That would have given advocates and state workers plenty of time to educate Alaskans about how elections would work going forward. But in February 2022, Don Young died. Young was Alaska's cantankerous U.S. Representative, famous for his propeller hat and office full of taxidermied animal heads. He had been in the U.S. House since 1973, when his predecessor—Democrat Nick Begich—died in a plane crash.  In the nearly fifty years since, Young had become something of an Alaskan institution, a pugnacious but relatively moderate Republican closely linked with federal government infrastructure spending in Alaska.

Under rules laid out in the U.S. Constitution and Alaska's election laws, Young's death meant that a special election would have to be held. This created a conundrum for the electoral authorities, who decided to hold the general special election (i.e. second round) on the same day as the regular primary elections (i.e. first round) for other 2022 electoral contests. Confounding the difficulty was that the regular August primary also included a primary for U.S. House—Don Young's old seat, the same seat subject to the August special election (on the other side of the ballot).  The other noteworthy aspect of the special election was the sheer volume of candidates standing. Shortly after Don Young's death, it became clear that a large number of would-be politicians viewed the special election as an opportunity to further their political careers. The list of primary contenders included some venerable names in Alaska politics, including former governor and vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin, former state legislator Mary Peltola, and Nick Begich III, grandson of Don Young's predecessor in the House of Representatives.

This proliferation of parties and candidates putting themselves forward for election under the new system was an important confirmation of one of the reformers' pitches to voters – that it would bring more diversity and more choice. That it certainly did, with an unprecedented number of candidates running in the special primary election – 48 in total.  Some of these were well-covered by national media, including Santa Claus (his legal name), an assembly member from the city of North Pole, East of Fairbanks who ran on what he described as a pro-children platform. Other venerable names included former State Senate Majority Leader

John Coghill (also from North Pole), former State Representative Andrew Halcro, Democratic State Representative Adam Wool, State Senator Josh Revak, and many other respected current and former politicians. Within those 48 candidates, there were also an unparalleled number of women and people of color, including several Alaska Native candidates; among others, Tara Sweeney, who served as Undersecretary for Indian Affairs under Donald Trump, Emil Notti, a venerable Alaska Native activist well-known for his role in land claims struggles, and most significantly Mary Peltola, a former state legislator who had been heavily involved in fisheries policy.
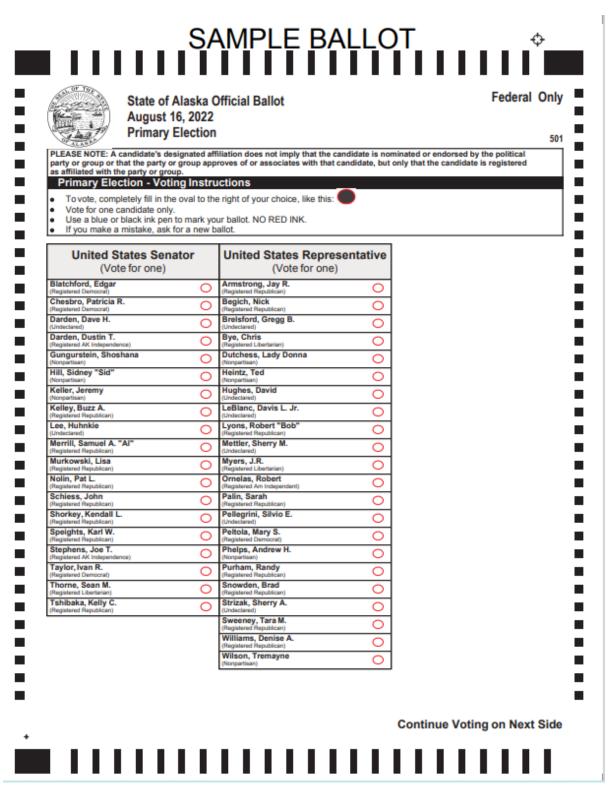
**Figure 1**: 2022 Primary Ballot for U.S. House and Senate

The number of candidates standing in the regular primary elections also increased: 22 for the U.S. House election (including the three finalists from the same day's special election), and 19 for the U.S. Senate (see Figure One). By comparison, Alaska's 2020 elections, the last under the old system, saw just three candidates each run in the Republican U.S. House primary and four in the joint Democratic and Alaska Independence Party primary, and even

lower numbers in the Senate – one unopposed Republican, the three in the combined primary for Democrats and Independents.

The 2022 open primary produced a far more diverse slate, including multiple representatives of the Republican, Democratic, Libertarian, and Alaskan Independence parties. While this could be seen as a confirmation that the reform did indeed weaken parties, there is little to suggest that Alaska's pre-reform party system has been altered or undermined as a result. In the four statewide nonpartisan primaries, major party representatives won 10 of the 12 spots on offer – not unlike earlier elections, where independents and third-party candidates enjoyed occasional success – while most of the remaining candidates also had party ties. The most important factor in success seemed to be candidate and party name recognition – goods that the major parties help to provide.

Thus, the top four finishers from the 48-candidate special election primary (Palin, Begich, Gross, and Peltola) included both hardline and moderate Republicans (Palin and Begich, respectively), one independent (Gross), and one Democrat (Peltola). Similarly, the Senate primary sent incumbent moderate Republican Lisa Murkowski, Trump-endorsed Kelly Tshibaka—who almost certainly would have won a Republican primary—as well as Democrat Pat Chesbro, on to the general election.[12] The U.S. House and gubernatorial primaries similarly saw a combination of moderate and hardline Republicans facing a lone Democrat in the RCV general election.

In each case, the new election rules meant that both traditional and insurgent candidates made it through to the general election. Many more candidates ran for office compared to the old system, increasing from 7 in 2020 to 22 for the House and 4 to 19 for the Senate, including candidates from conservative, center-right, center-left, and progressive ideologies. The vote share required to advance to the RCV general in the four statewide primary races ranged from 2.2 percent to 10.1 percent, confirming the low barrier to entry even with only four candidates making it to the general election.

The four statewide races also provided identifiable versions of what Drutman (2020) calls America's "hidden four-party system". Table 1 gives our breakdown of the candidates from the four statewide primary elections based on this four-way ideological split.

These same patterns of greater diversity appear to hold for primary contests to the Alaskan State Legislature, with one exception: the top-four open primaries had almost no reductive impact on the number of candidates going through to the general elections. All state Senate and state House contests except one had four candidates or fewer. While there was a small increase in candidate numbers overall, the relatively low numbers of nominees combined with the permissive nature of the system effectively meant that all candidates standing for nomination were successful. Most races included multiple candidates of at least one party and 13 races included multiple candidates but only from a single party (i.e., races were competitive but only between two or more Republicans or two or more Democrats), with voters able to identify more moderate and more extreme candidates in individual races. Thus, general election voters had more options than previously and played the winnowing role previously ascribed to primary voters.

---

[12] A fourth Republican, Buzz Kelley, withdrew before polling day but remained on the ballot and endorsed Tshibaka.

**Table 1: Ideological Distribution of Top Four Winners from 2022 Alaskan Statewide Primary Elections**

|  | CONSERVATIVE | CENTER-RIGHT | CENTER-LEFT | PROGRESSIVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Special U.S. House | Palin (R) | Begich (R) | Gross (I) Peltola (D) |  |
| U.S. House | Palin (R), Bye (L) | Begich (R) | Peltola (D) | - |
| U.S. Senate | Tshibaka (R), Kelley (R) | Murkowski (R) | - | Chesbro (D) |
| Gubernatorial | Dunleavy (R), Pierce (R) | Walker (I) | - | Gara (D) |

D – Democratic, I – Independent, L – Libertarian, R – Republican.

## The Statewide RCV Elections

The shift to RCV for the general election was also immediately consequential. In the state's first RCV election– a special election for Alaska's sole seat in the U.S. House of Representatives held at the same time as the August primaries – candidates' and parties' willingness to adapt to the strategic logic of RCV played a major role in the eventual outcome. The race was affected by the dropout of the third-placed independent candidate Al Gross, leaving two Republicans, Sarah Palin and Nick Begich, facing Democrat Mary Peltola.

This three-way contest made the order of elimination and distribution of rankings crucial. Peltola won 40.2 percent of first rankings, with the two Republicans – Palin and Begich – gaining 31.3 percent and 28.5 percent respectively. In other circumstances, one might have expected Republican voters to rank both candidates first and second. But the campaign had featured considerable animosity between Palin and Begich, who attacked each other far more than their Democratic opponent. In addition, Palin remained very unpopular among Alaskan voters, many of whom view her as a "quitter" who failed to complete her single term as Alaska governor.  Palin had also played no meaningful role in Alaska politics since she left the governor's mansion to run for vice president alongside John McCain in 2008, nearly fifteen years before her race for the U.S. House. Though strong statewide name recognition was enough to boost her to first place in the primary, her very strong negative approval ratings, and her reputation as an attention seeker and unserious candidate contributed to her inability to gather a majority of first and second-place votes. Ultimately, voters who ranked Begich first effectively decided the outcome. When he was eliminated, half of all Begich supporters ranked Palin second, but more than one-quarter crossed party lines and ranked Peltola second with the remainder opting not to give a second choice.

Peltola's campaign strategy was an interesting counterpoint to Palin and Begich's negative campaigning.  Even in advance of the election, Peltola had a reputation for collegiality. Perhaps as a result of her collegial personality or perhaps due to a recognition of the incentives presented by the new system—likely a combination of both—she ran a very positive campaign in which she actively sought the second-choice votes of Palin and Begich voters.  This was made easier by the fact that Peltola had a friendly relationship with Palin dating from their shared time in Juneau (Alaska's capital) fifteen years before, when Palin was governor and Peltola served in the Alaska State House.

The result was a narrow majority victory for Peltola, the first Alaska Native candidate to represent Alaska in Congress. While she was the first count leader, post-election analysis of the cast vote record suggested Begich was the 'Condorcet candidate' who would have won

a series of one-on-one contests.[13] Nonetheless, Peltola was the most effective campaigner under the new system, as the *Anchorage Daily News* observed:

> Ranked choice voting experts have long said the system favors candidates who can build broad appeal and play by the ranked choice rules. Palin is neither — three in five Alaskans think negatively about her, according to multiple polls, and she has called Alaska's new voting system "whack" and "cockamamie." Peltola has more closely adhered to the unwritten rules of ranked choice voting — she has refrained from attacking either of her opponents, focusing instead on drawing support on issues that many Alaskans agree on, like the need to protect fisheries and abortion access.[14]

Peltola and Murkowski, the two candidates whose campaign styles most embraced the logic of RCV, went further in the lead up to the November general elections, explicitly cross-endorsing each other in their respective races and making public commitments that they would personally vote that way regardless of party ties. This unusual example of cross-partisan campaigning was not explicitly a reaction to electoral incentives, as the two were competing in separate House and Senate contests. But it was clearly in line with the shift to more accommodative and civil campaigning that RCV advocates have long touted.[15]

The race for Governor saw a more typical RCV cross-endorsement deal struck between former Governor Bill Walker, an independent, and former state Rep. Les Gara, a Democrat. Gara and Walker not only indicated they would each vote for the other second but also urged voters to do the same in joint television ad featuring their female running-mates. Both well-known figures with a profile to the left of incumbent Governor Mike Dunleavy, this arrangement was "tailor made for Alaska's new voting system".[16] With Dunleavy polling strongly, it gave both Walker and Gara an outside chance of a 'come-from-behind' victory if voters followed their advice to rank the other ticket second.

The general election ultimately saw clear victories for the incumbents, Murkowski, Peltola, and Dunleavy. Dunleavy won his majority outright, while Peltola and Murkowski both won a plurality of first-choice votes but needed two rounds of eliminations to achieve a majority under RCV. This was not a surprise and, in many ways, the RCV count, while taking longer to conclude, added a degree of predictability to the election outcomes. Most notable was the fact that the three state wide victors, despite being elected at the same time by the same electorate under the same voting system, represented very different ideologies: moderate and conservative Republican, and centrist Democrat.

The general and special elections also highlighted the importance of strategic coordination under the new system. The Alaskan Republican party consistently asked its voters to "rank the red" so that in the House contests, Palin supporters should rank Begich second and vice

---

[13] See, for example, *Fairvote*. 2022: "73% of Alaska Voters Ranked Multiple Candidates in Special U.S. House Election." September 9. https://fairvote.org/press/alaska_cast_vote_record_released/

[14] Anchorage Daily News. 2022. "Results in Alaska's special U.S. House race expected Wednesday after candidates are set to share a stage." August 21.

[15] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "At AFN, Murkowski says she'll vote for longtime friend and Democrat Mary Peltola for U.S. House." October 23.

[16] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "Walker, Gara running mates release joint ad in late-campaign effort to replace Dunleavy." October 28.

versa. However, while Begich vowed to do so, Palin did not reciprocate and instead criticized RCV, including falsely claiming that the third-placed candidate in their three-way race could win under the system.[17]

After the special election loss, Palin relented and somewhat reluctantly advised her supporters to rank all Republicans running, although she remained unwilling to actually mention Begich's name in the process.[18] Similarly in Alaska's U.S. Senate race, Trump-endorsed challenger Tshibaka dismissed the "rank the red" recommendation, and advised her supporters not to give a preference vote to Murkowski, while Donald Trump claimed that RCV had only been introduced "because of Murkowski – it's the only way she could win."[19]

The outcomes, a Republican strategist observed, "should illustrate to Republicans very clearly that when they choose not to rank, there's a good possibility that when their favorite candidate is eliminated, then their vote will no longer be in the mix."[20] In this respect, Alaska echoes Maine's experience, where Republicans opposed RCV's introduction from the beginning and tried repeatedly to have it repealed or declared unconstitutional. As in Alaska, this opposition also spilled over into political tactics: in 2018, incumbent Republican Bruce Poliquin lost Maine's Second Congressional District to Democrat challenger Jared Golden after explicitly rejecting the idea of either giving or receiving second and later rankings – a flawed political strategy under RCV that resulted in the loss of a potentially winnable seat.[21] As one of Maine's independent candidates whose supporters ultimately determined the 2018 outcome put it: "You'd be foolish not to rank" (Reilly 2021).

The Alaska Republican Party, like their counterparts in Maine, has also vowed to repeal RCV once its two-year grace period has expired.[22] However, opinion polls showed over four-fifths of voters found the new system simple to use, and a new cross-partisan majority in the State legislature is unlikely to dispense with the system that elected them.[23] Polling also indicates that a majority of Alaska voters support the new primary system; around 62% expressed support for the new top-four primary (compared to only 33% opposed).[24] Indeed, the new election system was partly responsible for electing a Senate class which quickly formed a

---

[17] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "With Less Than 2 Weeks to Go in Alaska's U.S. House Race, Palin Went to the Lower 48." August 6.

[18] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "OPINION: Conservatives needs to bite the bullet, 'rank the red'." October 24. Here, Palin accused 'political elites' of misleading voters into bullet voting (voting for only a single candidate without ranking second or third choices). Absent was any admission that she was one of those same political elites.

[19] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "Alaska Voters Weigh a New System as First Ranked Choice Election Approaches." July 14.

[20] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "Democrat Mary Peltola Wins Special U.S. House Election, Will Be First Alaska Native Elected to Congress." August 31.

[21] By 2020 there was evidence of some modest learning on this issue, with Green activist Lisa Savage asking her supporters to rank the Democrat candidate second in Maine's Senate race, a position that was (eventually) reciprocated (Cerrone and McClintock 2021). Studies of New York City's first RCV elections also found that candidates could have made greater use of vote-pooling: "Had more cross-endorsements had taken place among the leading candidates, or if endorsing groups and individuals had been more aggressive in advocating slates of ranked candidates, this might well have changed the outcome" (Mollenkopf et al 2022, 2).

[22] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "In Alaska's U.S. Senate Race, Murkowski and Tshibaka Look Ahead to November." August 11.

[23] *Anchorage Daily News*. 2022. "Updated Elections Results Solidify Incumbents' Positions in Alaska's Statewide Races." November 15.

[24] Alaskans for Better Elections. 2022. "Polling Shows Alaskan Voters Understand Ranked Choice Voting." August 30.

Democrat-led, bipartisan coalition majority after November's election. This majority coalition is supportive of the new election system, so repeal is unlikely. A somewhat more conservative cross-party coalition formed in the State House after several months of negotiations which excluded the chamber's most extreme members but included most Republicans and a few Independents and Democrats. Thus, both chambers of the state legislature are controlled by relatively moderate cross-party coalitions.

## Conclusion

Alaska's combination of an open primary in which the top four candidates then compete in a ranked choice general election is in its early stages as an experiment in centripetal institutional design. Nonetheless, based on its first application, the new system has impacted already the diversity of primary fields, the political party system, and the kinds of candidates elected.

Perhaps the clearest impact is on the range of choices offered to voters at primary elections. Alaska's four 2022 primary elections for statewide offices all featured a much broader range of partisan, ideological and identity options to choose between than at any previous primary election. Three to five times the number of candidates competed in the U.S. House and Senate races compared to the old system. Most importantly, there was a genuine diversity of ideological options presented, including hardliners and moderates from both the left and the right, running on a range of issues and platforms. The new system allowed moderate Republicans to survive otherwise likely elimination by Trump Republicans via conventional Republican primaries for the three federal seats.

The design of the open primary made explicit factional divisions within the major parties (particularly the Republicans) while also providing opportunities for smaller parties and minorities to progress to the general election. As expected, the system is electorally quite permissive. While winnowing-out some fringe candidates, all candidates with at least 10 percent support went through to the general election. Allowing multiple candidates to advance to the general election in this way clearly gave Alaskan voters a greater range of choices and injected more competition into general elections compared to the standard primary model.

The other inescapable conclusion from the Alaskan experience concerns outcomes. Both the primary and general elections delivered results unlikely under the old system. For the US House, Sarah Palin's top-place primary finish would have seen her as the endorsed Republican candidate under the old system and likely be one of only two candidates in the general, facing a Democratic or even Independent challenger. For the Senate, moderates like Lisa Murkowski may well have lost their primaries outright and not appeared on the November ballot at all. It is possible that these results reflect a weakening of traditional party structures but if so, that party weakening was not associated with greater extremism but rather with greater moderation.

Joint campaigns and cross-endorsements, an indicator of moderation and accommodation, were a feature of all statewide races and clearly aided Murkowski and Peltola. Although there were no "come-from-behind" RCV victories as in Maine, Peltola, and Murkowski ultimately relied on transfers from eliminated candidates, with flows of votes from both the right and the left to the center. Such cross-partisan, split-ticket shifting in rankings between candidates gave Alaskan voters, most of whom are not irrevocably committed to one party or another, greater political leverage than in the past. Effectively, the new system further factionalized Alaska's already weak and divided political parties, then allowed voters to aggregate these

now explicit factions into new coalitions, giving a leg-up to independents and moderates over partisan diehards and hardliners.

Post-election polling suggests that Alaska voters felt well-prepared to vote in both the top-four primaries and ranked choice general elections and were supportive of the new system. Despite some observers' concerns about confusing ballots and ill-informed voters, post-election polling suggested that most voters understood the new system quite well and did not find voting difficult (85% found voting somewhat or very simple), most chose to rank more than one candidate (about 66%) and a large majority (62%) support the new top-four primary system, while only 33% oppose.[25]

In sum, the first use of 'Top 4-RCV' in Alaska proved to be both practically consequential and largely in line with theoretical expectations. A similar process seems to be at work in the Alaskan state legislative races, which we will examine in a subsequent article. In 2022 another state, Nevada, also voted to adopt a top-5 version of the system, which (if confirmed in a second initiative vote in 2024) will offer further cases to examine. A number of national commentators see the Alaskan model as relevant to the rest of the United States (Babarak 2022, Foley 2022, Pildes 2022; Olsen 2022). We share this positive view.

## Acknowledgements

---

[25] Alaskans for Better Elections. 2022. "Polling Shows Alaskan Voters Understand Ranked Choice Voting." August 30.

# References

Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Alvarez, R. Michael and J. Andrew Sinclair. 2015. *Nonpartisan Primary Election Reform: Mitigating Mischief*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barabak, Mark. 2022. "Alaska Just Changed its Election System to Weed Out Hard-Liners. Maybe Other States Should Too." *Los Angeles Times*, 22 January.

Bartels, Larry M. 2016. "Failure to Converge: Presidential Candidates, Core Partisans, and the Missing Middle in American Electoral Politics." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667(1):143–65.

Bartels, Larry M. 2020. "Ethnic Antagonism Erodes Republicans' Commitment to Democracy." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117: 22752–59.

Binkley, John, Melanie Bahnke, Nicole Borromeo, Bethany Marcum and Budd Simpson. 2021. *Alaska Redistricting Board Proclamation 2021*. Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Redistricting Board.

Bishop, Bill. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Brennan, Geoffrey. and Loren Lomasky. 1993. *Democracy and Decision: The Pure Theory of Electoral Preference*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cerrone, Joseph and Cynthia McClintock. 2021. "Ranked-Choice Voting, Runoff, and Democracy: Insights from Maine and Other U.S. States." Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3769409u.

Cox, Gary. 1996. "Is the Single Nontransferable Vote Superproportional? Evidence from Japan and Taiwan." *American Journal of Political Science* 40(3): 740-755.

Diamond, Larry. 2015. "De-Polarizing." *The American Interest* 11(2).

Diamond, Larry. 2017. "How to Reverse the Degradation of Our Politics." *The American Interest*, November 10.

Dionne, Eugene Joseph, Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann. 2018. *One Nation After Trump*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Donovan, Todd, Caroline Tolbert and Kellen Gracey. 2016. "Campaign Civility Under Preferential and Plurality Voting." *Electoral Studies* 42: 157–163.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

Drutman, Lee. 2020. *Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop: The Case for Multiparty Democracy in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Drutman, Lee. and Maresa Strano. 2021. *What We Know About Ranked-Choice Voting*. Washington DC: New America Foundation.

Drutman, Lee. 2021. *What We Know about Congressional Primaries and Congressional Primary Reform*. Washington DC: New America Foundation.

Feinstein, Michael. 2020. "Why California Shoiuld Learn from Maine and Not Alaska on Electoral Reform." *Independent Voter News*. December 28.

Fiorina, Morris P. and Samuel J. Abrams. 2011. *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope. 2005. *The Myth of a Polarized America.* New York: Pearson Longman.

Foley, Edward. 2022. "Can Alaska Save Democracy?" *Washington Post*. February 12.

Fried, Amy and Robert W. Glover. 2018. "Maine's Ranked-Choice Voting Experiment Continues." *The American Prospect*. November 20.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2022. "Paths to Depolarization." *Persuasion,* August 3.

Gehl, Katherine M. and Michael E. Porter. 2017. *Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America: A Strategy for Reinvigorating our Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.

Grofman Bernard. 1999. "SNTV: An Inventory of Theoretically Derived Propositions and a Brief Review of the Evidence from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Alabama." In Bernard Grofman, Sung-Chull Lee, Edwin A. Winckler and Brian Woodall, eds., *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the Single Non-Transferable Vote: The Comparative Study of an Embedded Institution*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Grose, Christian R. 2020. "Reducing Legislative Polarization: Top-Two and Open Primaries Are Associated with More Moderate Legislators." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 1: 1–21.

Hill, Seth J. and Chris Tausanovitch. 2015. "A Disconnect in Representation? Comparison of Trends in Congressional and Public Polarization." *Journal of Politics* 77(4): 1058-75.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1985, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1991. *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

John, Sarah, Haley Smith and Elizabeth Zack. 2018. "The Alternative Vote: Do Changes in Single-Member Voting Systems Affect Descriptive Representation of Women and Minorities?" *Electoral Studies* 54:90-102.

Kendall, Scott and La queen náay Liz Medicine Crow. 2021. "Alaska's Election System Has Upped its Game. The Rest of the Nation Should Follow." *Roll Call*, June 14.

Kleinfeld, Rachel. 2021. "Profound Rebuilding Needed to Shore Up U.S. Democracy." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 7. https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/01/07/profound-rebuilding-needed-to-shore-up-u.s.-democracy-pub-83575

Kousser, Thad. 2015. "The Top-Two Contest: Did Changing the Rules Change the Game in Statewide Contests?" *California Journal of Politics and Policy* 7(1).

Lublin, David. 2007. *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mann, Thomas E. 2007. "Polarizing the House of Representatives: How Much Does Gerrymandering Matter?" In Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady, eds., *Red and Blue Nation? Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics v.1*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Mann, Thomas J. and Norman J. Ornstein. 2012. *It's Even Worse than it Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books.

Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McCoy, Jennifer and Benjamin Press. 2022. "What Happens When Democracies Become Perniciously Polarized?" Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/01/18/what-happens-when-democracies-become-perniciously-polarized-pub-86190

McCulloch, Allison. 2013. "Does Moderation Pay? Centripetalism in Deeply Divided Societies." *Ethnopolitics* 12(2): 111-132.

McDaniel, Jason. 2018. "Does More Choice Lead to Reduced Racially Polarized Voting? Assessing the Impact of Ranked-Choice Voting in Mayoral Elections." *California Journal of Politics and Policy* 10(2): 1-24.

McGhee, Eric and Boris Shor. 2017. "Has the Top Two Primary Elected More Moderates?" *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4): 1053-66.

Miller, Gary, and Norman Schofield. 2008. "The Transformation of the Republican and Democratic Party Coalitions in the U.S." *Perspectives on Politics* 6(3): 433–450.

Mollenkopf, John, Steven Romalewski, Valerie Bauer, Ken Silverman, Laura Tamman and Kenisha White. 2022. *The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on the Democratic Primary Elections of 2021*. New York: Center for Urban Research, The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Nagler, Jonathan. 2015. "Voting Behavior in California's Top-Two Primary." *California Journal of Politics and Policy* 7:1.

Olsen, Henry. 2022. "Lisa Murkowski is Showing the Limits of Political Extremism." *Washington Post*, August 18.

Parnell, Sean and Mark Begich. 2020. "Alaska's Election Initiative Is Rank." *Washington Post*. July 23.

Pew Research Center. 2014. "Political Polarization in Action: Insights into the 2014 Election from the American Trends Panel." https://pewrsr.ch/3EZsUf0.

Phillips, Kevin P. 2015. *The Emerging Republican Majority, Revised Edition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pildes, Richard. 2022. "More Places Should Do What Alaska Did to Its Elections." *New York Times*, February 15.

Polsby, Nelson. 1983. *Consequences of Party Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reilly, Benjamin. 2001. *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Reilly, Benjamin. 2016. "Centripetalism." In Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict (Rev. 2nd edition)*. Routledge: London and New York.

Reilly, Benjamin. 2021. "Ranked Choice Voting in Australia and America: Do Voters Follow Party Cues?" *Politics and Governance* 9(2): 271–279.

Reilly, Benjamin and Jack Stewart. 2021. "Compulsory Preferential Voting, Social Media and 'Come-From-Behind' Electoral Victories in Australia." *Australian Journal of Political Science* 9(2): 271-279.

Reilly, Benjamin, David Lublin and Rachel Leven. 2022. *Final-Five Voting: Comparative Evidence on a Novel Electoral System*. Chicago: Institute for Political Innovation. https://p5r8m7s7.stackpathcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FFV-Comparative-Evidence.pdf

Santucci, Jack. 2021. "The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy." Book review. *Governance* 34(2): 596-99.

Santucci, Jack. 2022. *More Parties or No Parties: The Politics of Electoral Reform in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sharman, Campbell, Anthony M. Sayers and Narelle Miragliotta. 2002. "Trading Party Preferences: The Australian Experience of Preferential Voting." *Electoral Studies* 21(4): 543–560.

Shugart, Matthew. 2020. "The New Alaskan Beast." *Fruits and Votes* [blog], November 20. https://fruitsandvotes.wordpress.com/2020/11/20/the-new-alaskan-beast/.

Sides, John, Chris Tausanovitch, Lynn Vavrick and Christopher Warshaw. 2020. "On the Representativeness of Primary Electorates." *British Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 677-85.

Sinclair, Betsy. 2015. "Introduction: the California Top Two Primary." *California Journal of Politics and Policy* 7:1.

Slaughter, Anne-Marie, Francis Fukuyama and Larry Diamond. 2019. "How to Fix Polarization: Ranked-Choice Voting." *Politico.com.* https://www.politico.com/interactives/2019/how-to-fix-politics-in-america/polarization/ranked-choice-voting/.

Weiser, Wendy, Rob Richie and Sanford Levinson. 2016. "This is What a Political Revolution Really Looks Like," *The Nation*, March 25.