

Pierce voters nix 'ranked-choice voting'

by David Ammons | November 10th, 2009



It was widely advertised as the latest cool thing in voting – “ranked-choice voting” or “instant-runoff voting.”

Just three years ago, Pierce County voters, responding to a proposal from the charter review commission, approved this new system for all county elected officials except judges and prosecutors. This system, used rather than the Top 2 Primary, essentially combines the primary and general. Voters pick their favorites for each office, ranking their choices 1-2-3. Candidates who win strictly on first-place ballots are declared elected. If no one does, then second and third choices are apportioned out. The factoring is done by a computerized algorithm.

It has always been kinda confused to explain, but advocates believed it would be

extremely popular and then possibly catch on elsewhere. Its biggest usage was last year when a new County Executive and other offices were filled this way, running in tandem with the regular state primary and general elections.

It went downhill from there. Voters participating in an auditor’s survey said by a 2-to-1 margin that they didn’t like the system. And this year, it was back on the ballot –and voters have thrown it out by a 71-29 margin.