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Instant runoff fiasco

Remember the odd judicial race you voted in five weeks ago today, with a so-called "instant runoff" format?

You indicated a first, second and third preference among 13 candidates.

Well, it's still not settled -- belying the "instant" component of this hare-brained scheme.

And it looks like it's going to produce a second-is-first result, [The N&O reports](#) today.

Cressie Thigpen led in first-choice voting with 20 percent. Doug McCullough was next with 15 percent.

Under the rules, those two advanced to a second round of counting where the second- and third-preference votes were added to their totals. That process has been inching along county by county.

The State Board of Elections now says McCullough has overtaken Thigpen with only Warren County's votes still out. McCullough's margin is too great for Warren County votes to close so McCullough will win -- barring a recount or a legal challenge to the whole process, either of which is possible.

As far as qualifications go, either man is fine. McCullough served on the Court of Appeals for eight years and was considered a good judge. Thigpen is there now, having been appointed by Gov. Perdue to temporarily replace Judge Jim Wynn. Because there is another vacancy on the court created by Barbara Jackson's election to the Supreme Court, Perdue can reappoint Thigpen if she wants. That would be a good idea.

But the point is that the candidate who earns the most first-choice votes ought to win the election. Second- and third-choice votes simply should not carry as much weight. Thigpen finished first in the real voting and he should not be defeated because of second and third votes.

Instant runoff voting was confusing, convoluted and, in the end, has produced an undemocratic result. The state should dump this crazy system.

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Posted by [Doug Clark](#) on Tuesday, December 7, 2010 at 7:33 am

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