

**Instant Run-off Voting (IRV)** ballots allow a voter to rank the candidates in a primary so that in the event of a runoff, their preference can be determined. This method is applicable only when a military or overseas citizen is voting absentee by mail in a primary as outlined in S.C. Code of Laws Section 7-15-405)

- A. When examining an IRV ballot, the county election commission must consider only the candidates involved in the runoff and ignore any marks for other candidates.
- B. The commission must determine if the voter clearly expressed a preference between the two candidates in the runoff. If so, the commission must count the vote for that candidate.
- C. Examples:
  1. In Figure i, Calhoun and Witherspoon are in the runoff. Marks for Mills and Mondale are ignored. Looking at only the rows with Calhoun and Witherspoon, we see the voter clearly prefers Calhoun.

<b>For HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b> <i>Rank the candidates in order of preference</i>				
Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice	4 <sup>th</sup> Choice
JOHN CALHOUN	①	●	③	④
ROBERT MILLS	●	②	③	④
WALTER MONDALE	①	②	③	●
JOHN WITHERSPOON	①	②	●	④

Figure i

2. In Figure ii, the voter clearly expresses a preference for Calhoun.

<b>For HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b> <i>Rank the candidates in order of preference</i>				
Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice	4 <sup>th</sup> Choice
JOHN CALHOUN	①	●	③	④
ROBERT MILLS	①	②	③	④
WALTER MONDALE	①	②	③	④
JOHN WITHERSPOON	①	②	③	④

Figure ii

3. When a voter marks multiple choices for a candidate, consider only the highest choice marked. In Figures iii and iv, the voter clearly expresses preferences for Witherspoon.

<b>For HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b> <i>Rank the candidates in order of preference</i>				
Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice	4 <sup>th</sup> Choice
JOHN CALHOUN	①	②	③	④
ROBERT MILLS	①	②	●	④
WALTER MONDALE	●	②	③	④
JOHN WITHERSPOON	①	●	③	●

Figure iii

<b>For HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b> <i>Rank the candidates in order of preference</i>				
Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice	4 <sup>th</sup> Choice
JOHN CALHOUN	①	②	●	④
ROBERT MILLS	●	②	③	④
WALTER MONDALE	①	②	③	④
JOHN WITHERSPOON	①	●	③	●

Figure iv

4. If the voter's preference for the two runoff candidates is the same it is an over vote and should not be counted. Figure v shows an example of an over-vote:

<b>For HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b> <i>Rank the candidates in order of preference</i>				
Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice	4 <sup>th</sup> Choice
JOHN CALHOUN	①	②	③	●
ROBERT MILLS	●	②	③	④
WALTER MONDALE	①	●	③	④
JOHN WITHERSPOON	①	②	③	●

Figure v

5. If the voter indicates no preference between the two runoff candidates it is an under vote and should not be counted. Figure vi shows an example of an under-vote:

For HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES				
Rank the candidates in order of preference				
Candidate	1 <sup>st</sup> Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> Choice	4 <sup>th</sup> Choice
JOHN CALHOUN	①	②	③	④
ROBERT MILLS	①	②	③	④
WALTER MONDALE	●	②	③	④
JOHN WITHERSPOON	①	②	③	④

Figure vi

- D. If the ballot is improperly marked (marked in a way other than filling in the ovals), a quorum of the county/municipal election commission must examine the ballot to determine if the voter’s intent can be discerned and, based on that determination, decide how the vote should be counted.
1. Improper marks that should be used in determining voter’s preference:
    - a) an “x”, check, circle, or other mark is made on the oval or close enough to the name/choice to discern the voter’s intent with certainty
    - b) an ordinal word or number, such as “first”, “2<sup>nd</sup>”, “3”, or “four,” is written close enough to the name/choice to discern the voter’s intent with certainty
  2. Examples of improper marks that should not be counted:
    - a) any erasures or cross-outs or attempts to erase or cross out a mark on or near an oval (Other, clear marks for the same candidate should be counted)
    - b) an “x”, check, circle, or other mark made on the ballot that is not close enough to an oval to discern the voter’s intent with certainty
    - c) an ordinal number that is not written close enough to a name to discern the voter’s intent with certainty
- E. If it is not possible to determine a voter’s preference for any runoff candidate, the ballot should not be counted and should be placed in an ‘Attention’ envelope and saved with the rest of the election materials to be retained for 22 months.
- F. For more detailed information on determining what constitutes a vote on an IRV ballot see Appendix A of the *Absentee IRV Guide*.