

Write A Letter-to-the Editor

Thanks for your interest in writing a letter-to-the-editor about instant runoff voting in South Carolina.

We hope you'll find everything you need below to craft and submit your letter, but if you do not, feel free to reach out to us at info@BetterBallotSC.org

Thanks again! We're so happy you're part of our team.

— Better Ballot SC

Learn the submission requirements for the publication where you'd like to submit:

- What is the word count limit for letters to the editor? These are usually very short, anywhere from 150 to 350 words.
- Is there a submission deadline to keep in mind (e.g. for weekly papers)?
- How do I submit the letter through the appropriate channel? There could be a specific email address or a submission form.

Do's:

- Keep your letter short, and within the word count requirement. You're looking for something pithy.
- There is no need to be formal, use a conversational tone.
- Submit your letter to one publication. Publishers want unique content.
- Think about a local and personal touch: what will make the reader relate to you? For example, you can talk about a recent local election you voted in and how the current voting system affected it.
- Make it interesting! If it bores you, it will bore the paper.

- LTEs are meant to be reactions to a specific article, column, or event. Send letters quickly, the same day, if possible. Publications like to keep things current.
- Focus on the facts, not the messenger. Letters to the editor that whine about bias in coverage are usually useless unless backed up by provable facts demonstrating significant errors on the part of the publication.
- Try to make the letter self-contained. Readers may not be familiar with the piece that generated the letter. Include at least one line that explains the previous article your letter is referring to.
- Keep with it: a newspaper won't necessarily accept your first submission. That's okay. We're playing the long game. Newspapers are more likely to editorialize on an issue after they receive lots of LTEs about it, and most people write a few LTEs before they see one in the newspaper.

Don't's:

- Don't focus on divisive duopoly language. There are plenty of positives that connect with people that aren't a red flag to the establishment. Remember, we need to work within the system to affect change
- Don't forget to check your facts. Our argument must be based on facts and research. There's plenty of good stuff out there. Be sure to use it. (Check out www.FairVote.org for some great studies and data)
- Don't call it ranked choice voting. That's not the messaging that we use. It's **instant runoff voting**. It will connect more with our voters since we have a runoff system that they are familiar with.

Great Talking Points:

- Runoffs are expensive and unnecessary. SC spent over \$830,000 in the 2018 primary runoffs and over \$1,000,000 in 2022. Charleston spent \$105,000 on their 2023 runoffs.
- IRV reduces polarization and negative campaigning. Successful IRV candidates reach a broad swath of their constituents by focusing on a

positive message instead of simply how they are better than their competition.

- People want candidates who win a majority, not a plurality. However, some education is necessary to drive that point home.
- IRV encourages competition by eliminating vote splitting and the spoiler effect. This allows more candidates to run and allows you to vote for the candidate who truly represents your values instead of voting strategically.
- IRV ensures majority support. Not all South Carolina elections result in a runoff if a candidate secures less than 50% of the vote. That means that we have elected officials for whom the majority of South Carolinian constituents did not vote.
- Some Great “Where It’s Used” Examples
 - In 2021, the Virginia GOP used IRV in their primary. They chose candidates with broad support and swept the state government including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General.
 - In 2021, 23 municipalities within Utah used IRV with more planning to use it in 2022. (They have an option that allows local governments to decide if they want to use IRV. This is what we are shooting for in SC as well)
 - Here in SC! Overseas military voters (as defined by UOCAVA) vote using an instant runoff ballot.

Again, if you have any questions please reach out to us at info@BetterBallotSC.org.

Thank you again for the time you are devoting to this worthy cause,
— Better Ballot SC