

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION OF ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA, TO SUPPORT AMENDING THE GEORGIA ELECTION CODE TO ALLOW MUNICIPALITIES, COUNTIES, AND CONSOLIDATED CITY-COUNTY GOVERNMENTS TO USE RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS.

WHEREAS, the current Election Code of the state of Georgia only allows two electoral systems for county and municipal elections, those being a plurality and two-round majority system; and

WHEREAS, two-round runoff elections require all of the cost and administrative difficulty of conducting two elections rather than just one; and

WHEREAS, current voting systems in Athens-Clarke County are compatible with ranked choice ballots with minimal upgrades needed; and

WHEREAS, ranked choice voting is currently used in Athens-Clarke County for ballots from military and overseas citizens; and

WHEREAS, amending the Election Code of the State of Georgia to allow cities, counties, and consolidated city-county governments to, if desired, use ranked choice voting (also known as instant runoff voting) for their local elections, may allow local governments to improve upon the administrative and logistical costs of conducting elections, thus reducing the tax burden on residents; and

WHEREAS, two-round runoff elections result in candidates winning in runoff elections with very low turnout, including a turnout decline of 84% in the Athens-Clarke County School District 2022 Board of Education District 2 runoff, as compared to the primary election; and

WHEREAS, ranked choice voting has been used across the United States for local elections in 48 cities, for statewide elections in Alaska and Maine, and for special elections in Hawaii, as well as dozens of American Colleges and Universities, hundreds of American Organizations and Corporations, and internationally in several countries; and

WHEREAS, the Utah State Legislature passed a measure allowing municipalities across the State to opt in to a trial of ranked choice voting, and 23 Cities participated in the trial, finding success and positive reception among voters there; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of ranked choice voting promotes democracy, facilitates greater voter choice, discourages partisan division and negative campaigning, and promotes the election of more diverse candidates, all in a single election and without the need for costly runoff elections; and

WHEREAS, ranked choice voting has been upheld in federal court as a one person, one vote system consistent with the United States Constitution;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Commission of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia as follows:

Section 1. Athens-Clarke County finds ranked choice voting to be a more efficient and effective voting system than either of the two voting systems that the State of Georgia currently allows local governments to use.

Section 2. Athens-Clarke County urges the Georgia Legislature to enact legislation to allow cities, counties, and consolidated city-counties to use ranked-choice voting for primary, general, and special elections, thereby alleviating the need for a runoff election.

Section 3. Athens-Clarke County urges the Georgia Legislature to specify consolidated city-counties, in addition to cities and counties, in any legislation regarding ranked choice voting.

Section 4. Recognizing that a ranked choice voting system may not be the preferred choice of every municipality throughout Georgia, Athens-Clarke County urges the Georgia Legislature to make ranked choice voting an option for municipalities to choose.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of December, 2024.

UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF ATHENS-CLARKE
COUNTY, GEORGIA

By:

Mayor

Attest: Keya D.
Deputy Chenekia Armstrong
Clerk of Commission

