

Dr. Steven Brams points out in his letter to the NY Times below, and has extensively researched voting method. He describes two fundamental problems with IRV:

Dear Editor,

The answer to the question that Sam Roberts poses is not that runoffs are superfluous but that they are too expensive. But the solution he suggests, "instant runoff voting," whereby voters rank candidates, is a poor one for two reasons.

First, because instant runoff eliminates candidates who get the fewest first-choice votes--transferring their votes to the candidates their supporters rank highest that remain in the race--a strong centrist candidate who comes in third in a 3-person race will not make the runoff. Consequently, the runoff will be between the two more extreme candidates, even though the centrist could beat each of these candidates in separate face-to-face contests by getting votes from not only his or her own supporters but also from the supporters of the other extreme candidate.

Second, though hard to believe, a voter can on occasion help a favorite candidate by not voting for him or her, or giving that candidate a low ranking. This is because of complications that arise in the elimination of candidates and the transfer of their votes to candidates they rank lower. Thus, a voter may affect negatively the chances of a favorite winning by ranking that candidate first--just the opposite of what one wants a voting system to do.

There are better remedies to the problem of selecting the strongest candidate in a race. One is "approval voting," whereby voters can approve of as many candidates as they like. This system tends to elect the strongest candidate overall, not the strongest minority candidate. Moreover, unlike instant runoff, a voter can never affect negatively the chances of an approved candidate's winning by approving of him or her.

Sincerely,  
Steven J. Brams  
Professor of Politics, NYU

These are real life problems, which have happened. University of Vermont's Legislative Research Shop studied the recent Mayoral election in Burlington and found the problem described in Prof. Bram's first reason.

A video describing the effect can be seen here: [www.tinyurl.com/IRVHead2Head](http://www.tinyurl.com/IRVHead2Head)

A video Describing Dr. Bram's second reason, which manifested itself in Aspen, CO's recent election can be seen here: [www.tinyurl.com/IRVMoreVotes](http://www.tinyurl.com/IRVMoreVotes)