

HOUSE No. 610

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Ellen Story

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to voting by the instant runoff voting method in primary elections.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Ellen Story

3rd Hampshire

Carmin L. Gentile

13th Middlesex

HOUSE No. 610

By Ms. Story of Amherst, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 610) of Ellen Story and Carmine L. Gentile relative to voting by the instant runoff voting method, so-called, in primary elections. Election Laws.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 646 OF 2013-2014.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**
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An Act relative to voting by the instant runoff voting method in primary elections.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 1 of chapter 50 of the General Laws is hereby amended, by
2 inserting after the definition of “federal act” the following definition: -

3 “Instant Runoff Voting”, a method of casting and tabulating votes that simulates the
4 ballot counts that would occur if all voters participated in a series of runoff elections with one
5 candidate eliminated after each round of counting. In elections using the Instant Runoff Voting
6 method, voters may rank the candidates in order of preference. In all such elections, the count
7 shall proceed in the following manner:

8 (1) The initial round of counting shall be a count of the first choices marked on each
9 ballot. If any candidate receives a majority of the first choices, that candidate shall be deemed
10 and declared elected.

11 (2) If no candidate receives a majority of first choices, there shall be a second round
12 of counting. The last-place candidate shall be eliminated, and all the continuing ballots shall be
13 recounted. “Continuing ballot” means a ballot that is not an exhausted ballot.

14 (3) Each continuing ballot shall be counted as one vote for that ballot’s highest
15 ranked advancing candidate. “Advancing candidate” means a candidate who has not been
16 eliminated.

17 (4) If no candidate receives a majority at the second round of counting, there shall be
18 a third round of counting. The last-place candidate shall be eliminated, and all the continuing
19 ballots shall be recounted. Each continuing ballot shall be counted as one vote for that ballot’s
20 highest ranked advancing candidate.

21 (5) The process of eliminating the last-place candidates and recounting all the
22 continuing ballots shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes in a round.
23 The candidate who receives a majority of the votes in a round shall be deemed and declared to be
24 elected.

25 (6) When a ballot becomes an exhausted ballot it shall not be counted in that round
26 or any subsequent round. “Exhausted ballot” means a ballot on which there are no choices
27 marked other than choices for eliminated candidates.

28 (7) If there are not sufficient second and lower choices for any candidate to receive a
29 majority, the candidate with the highest number of votes shall be deemed and declared to be
30 elected.

31 (8) No candidate who has been eliminated can be elected, no matter how many
32 second and lower ranked choices might otherwise have become votes for that candidate in a later
33 round.

34 SECTION 2. Section 2 of said chapter 50 is hereby amended by striking out the third
35 sentence and inserting in place thereof the following:-

36 This section shall not apply to nominations and elections by ballot at primaries or
37 caucuses. The Instant Runoff Voting method, as defined in section 1 of chapter 50 shall be the
38 method used for all primary elections and caucuses for the following offices when three or more
39 candidates have qualified to have their names printed on the ballot: governor, lieutenant
40 governor, attorney general, secretary of the commonwealth, state treasurer, and state auditor.
41 Ballots shall allow the voter to mark the voter's first choice in the same manner as that for
42 offices not elected by Instant Runoff Voting. Sample ballots illustrating voting procedures shall
43 be posted in or near the voting booth, and shall be included in the instruction packet for absentee
44 ballots. Directions to voters shall conform substantially to the following:

45 "Vote for your first-choice candidate by marking the number '1' next to that candidate's
46 name. In addition to your first choice candidate, you may rank additional candidates in order of
47 preference. Ranking additional candidates will not affect your first-choice candidate. Indicate
48 your second choice by marking the number '2' by that candidate's name, your third choice by

49 marking the number '3', and so on for as many candidates as you wish. Do not mark the same
50 number beside more than one candidate. Do not skip numbers.”

51 The secretary of the commonwealth shall adopt and promulgate regulations consistent
52 with this section, which regulations shall ensure that ballots shall be simple and easy to
53 understand. As soon as practicable, the secretary of the commonwealth shall ensure that all
54 voting equipment in the commonwealth is capable of effecting Instant Runoff Voting. In
55 addition, the secretary of the commonwealth shall conduct a voter education campaign to
56 familiarize voters with Instant Runoff Voting.