HOUSE . . . . No. 4499

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Sean Garballey and Cindy F. Friedman

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 authorizing ranked choice voting in the town of Arlington.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Sean Garballey	*23rd Middlesex*	*9/9/2025*
Cindy F. Friedman	*Fourth Middlesex*	*9/9/2025*

HOUSE . . . . No. 4499

By Representative Garballey of Arlington and Senator Friedman, a joint petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 4499) of Sean Garballey and Cindy F. Friedman (by vote of the town) for legislation to authorize ranked choice voting in the town of Arlington. Election Laws. [Local Approval Received.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

_____

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

_____

An Act authorizing ranked choice voting in the town of Arlington.

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. Chapter 503 of the acts of 1952, as most recently amended by section 1 of

2   chapter 10 of the acts of 2022, is hereby further amended by inserting after section 8A the

3   following section:-

4   Section 8B. Ranked Choice Voting

5   (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall, unless the context clearly

6   requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

7   "Concluded ballot", a ballot that does not rank any continuing candidate or contains an

8   overvote at the highest-ranked continuing candidate.

9   "Continuing candidate", a candidate who has not been defeated.

10   "Highest-ranked continuing candidate", the continuing candidate with the highest ranking

11   on a voter's ballot. Where a ballot omits l or more rankings, the next highest ranking shall be

12   used for determining the highest-ranked continuing candidate.

13   "Overvote", a circumstance in which a voter ranks more than 1 candidate at the same

14   ranking.

15   "Ranked choice voting", a method of casting and tabulating ballots in which voters rank

16   candidates for office in order of preference.

17   "Ranking", the number assigned on a ballot by a voter to a candidate to express the

18   voter's preference for that candidate. Ranking number 1 shall be the highest ranking, ranking

19   number 2 shall be the next-highest ranking and so on.

20   (b) The offices of select board member, school committee member, moderator, elected

21   member of the board of the housing authority and assessor shall be elected by ranked choice

22   voting, except for single-seat offices when the number of candidates printed on the ballot is less

23   than or equal to 2 or multi-seat offices when the number of candidates printed on the ballot is

24   less than or equal to the number of seats to be elected. Rank choice voting elections shall be

25   tabulated in rounds pursuant to this section.

26   (c) In any single-seat election, each round shall begin by counting the number of votes for

27   each continuing candidate. Each ballot shall count as 1 vote for its highest-ranked continuing

28   candidate. Concluded ballots shall not be counted for any continuing candidate. Each round shall

29   end with 1 of the following 2 outcomes:

30   (1) If there are 2 continuing candidates, the candidate with the most votes shall be

31   elected, and tabulation shall be complete.

32   (2) Otherwise, the candidate with the fewest votes shall be defeated and a new round

33   shall begin.

34   (d) In any multi-seat election, the first seat shall be filled pursuant to the tabulation

35   process established in subsection (c). The remaining seats shall be filled by repeated application

36   of the tabulation process established in subsection (c); provided, however, that all votes marked

37   for candidates who have already been elected shall be disregarded and votes shall be counted for

38   the next highest-ranked continuing candidate.

39   (e) If 2 or more candidates are tied with the fewest votes such that tabulation cannot

40   continue until the candidate with the fewest votes is defeated, then the tied candidate with the

41   fewest votes in the prior round shall be defeated. If 2 or more such tied candidates were tied with

42   the fewest votes in the prior round, the second tie shall be decided by referring similarly to the

43   number of votes for each candidate in the second-prior round. This process shall be applied

44   successively as many times as necessary. The town clerk shall establish a method of tiebreaking

45   that will be used if 2 or more candidates are tied with the fewest votes in the first round of

46   tabulation.

47   (f) The town clerk may make any changes, subject to approval by the select board, to the

48   ranked choice voting ballot and tabulation process necessary to ensure the integrity and smooth

49   functioning of the election; provided, that ranked choice voting shall still be used and the fewest

50   number of changes shall be made to achieve such purpose.

51   (g) The town clerk shall publish election results that show the tabulation by rounds.

52   SECTION 2. (A) The following question shall be placed on the ballot to be used at a

53   regular state or town election or at a special election called for the purpose of presenting the

54   question to the voters:

55   Shall an act entitled "An Act Authorizing Ranked Choice Voting in the Town of

56   Arlington" be accepted?

57   (B) The town attorney shall prepare the summary of the proposed legislation, which shall

58   appear on the ballot along with the question provided in paragraph (A) of this section.

59   (C) If a majority of votes cast in answer to the question is in the affirmative, section 1 of

60   this act shall take effect in the town of Arlington, but not otherwise.

61   SECTION 3. Section 2 shall take effect upon the passage of this act.