

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Kenneth I. Gordon

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 Bedford.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Kenneth I. Gordon</i>	<i>21st Middlesex</i>	<i>1/6/2026</i>

By Representative Gordon of Bedford, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 4916) of Kenneth I. Gordon (by vote of the town) for legislation to authorize ranked choice voting in the town of Bedford. 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 Bedford.

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. RANKED CHOICE VOTING

2 (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall, unless the context clearly
3 requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

"Concluded ballot", a ballot that does not rank any continuing candidate or contains an overvote at the highest-ranked continuing candidate.

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

"Highest-ranked continuing candidate", the continuing candidate with the highest ranking on a voter's ballot. Where a ballot omits 1 or more rankings, the next highest ranking shall be used for determining the highest-ranked continuing candidate.

10 "Overvote", a circumstance in which a voter ranks more than 1 candidate at the same
11 ranking.

12 "Ranking", the number assigned on a ballot by a voter to a candidate to express the
13 voter's preference for that candidate. Ranking number 1 shall be the highest ranking, ranking
14 number 2 shall be the next-highest ranking, and so on.

15 (b) All elected town offices shall be elected by ranked choice voting, except for single-
16 seat offices when the number of candidates printed on the ballot is less than or equal to 2 or
17 multi-seat offices when the number of candidates printed on the ballot is less than or equal to the
18 number of seats to be elected. Ranked choice voting elections shall be tabulated in rounds
19 pursuant to this section.

20 (c) In any single-seat election, each round shall begin by counting each ballot as 1 vote
21 for its highest-ranked continuing candidate. Concluded ballots shall not be counted for any
22 continuing candidate. Each round shall proceed sequentially as follows:

23 (1) If there are 2 continuing candidates, the candidate with the most votes shall be
24 elected, and tabulation shall be complete.

25 (2) If there are more than 2 continuing candidates, the candidate with the fewest votes
26 shall be defeated and a new round shall begin.

27 (d) In any multi-seat election, the first seat shall be filled pursuant to the tabulation
28 process established in subsection (c). The remaining seats shall be filled by repeated application
29 of the tabulation process established in subsection (c); provided, however, that all rankings
30 marked for candidates who have already been elected shall be disregarded and ballots shall be
31 counted as 1 vote for their next highest-ranked continuing candidate.

(e) If 2 or more candidates are tied with the fewest votes such that tabulation cannot continue until the candidate with the fewest votes shall be defeated, the tied candidate with the fewest votes in the prior round shall be defeated. If 2 or more such tied candidates were tied with the fewest votes in the prior round, the second tie shall be decided by referring similarly to the number of votes for each candidate in the second-prior round. This process shall be applied successively as many times as necessary. The Town Clerk shall establish a method of tiebreaking which shall be used if 2 or more candidates are tied with the fewest votes in the first round of tabulation.

(f) The Town Clerk shall have the authority to promulgate whatever rules are necessary to implement this act.

SECTION 2. The following question shall be placed on the ballot to be used at a regular
municipal election or at a special election called for the purpose of presenting the
question to the voters: Shall an act entitled "An Act Authorizing Ranked Choice Voting in the
Town of Bedford" be accepted?

(a) The Town Counsel shall prepare the summary of the proposed legislation, which shall be on the ballot along with the question provided in this section.

(b) If a majority of votes cast in answer to the question is in the affirmative, the town
is taken to have accepted the legislation, but not otherwise.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect immediately upon approval of said question; and, however, that it shall be applicable only to town elections whose date is 90 days or after the day the act is accepted.