

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Manny Cruz and Joan B. Lovely

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 for local elections in the city of Salem.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Manny Cruz</i>	<i>7th Essex</i>	<i>6/29/2026</i>

HOUSE No.

[Pin Slip]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act authorizing ranked choice voting for local elections in the city of Salem.

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 445 of the Acts of 1960, establishing preliminary elections in
2 Salem, is hereby repealed.

3 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of chapters 50 through 54 of the general
4 laws, or of any other general or special law to the contrary, election of candidates at municipal
5 elections in the City of Salem shall be conducted using ranked choice voting when there are
6 more than 2 candidates for a single seat office or more candidates than the number of seats for a
7 multiple seat office.

8 SECTION 3. For purposes of this act, the following definitions shall apply.

9 a. "Board", the board of registrars of the city of Salem or other body serving in a similar
10 capacity by whatever name.

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

- 13 c. “Continuing candidate”, a candidate who has not been defeated or elected.
- 14 d. “Highest-ranked continuing candidate”, the continuing candidate with the highest
15 ranking on a voter’s ballot; provided that if a ranking is skipped, the next highest ranking shall be
16 used.
- 17 e. “Overvote”, a voter ranks more than 1 candidate at the same ranking.
- 18 f. “Ranked Choice Voting” or “RCV”, shall mean an election system in which voters
19 rank the candidates for an office in order of preference. The calculation of election results occurs
20 in rounds in which votes are distributed to candidates according to the preferences marked on
21 each ballot.
- 22 g. “Ranking”, the number assigned by a voter to express preference for a candidate, with
23 ranking number 1 as the highest preference;
- 24 h. “Repeat candidate ranking,” shall mean when a voter ranks the same candidate at
25 multiple rankings for the contest being counted
- 26 i. “Round,” shall mean the sequence of ranked choice voting steps established by sections
27 4 and 5 of this act.
- 28 j. “Skipped ranking,” shall mean when a voter leaves a ranking blank and ranks a
29 candidate at a subsequent ranking;

30 SECTION 4. Single-Seat Elections.

- 31 a. Each ballot shall count as 1 vote for its highest-ranked continuing candidate for that
32 office. Concluded ballots shall not be counted for that office.

33 b. If there are 2 or fewer continuing candidates, the candidate with the most votes shall be
34 elected.

35 c. If there are more than 2 continuing candidates, the candidate with the fewest votes
36 shall be defeated.

37 d. The vote tabulation process shall then be repeated, eliminating the candidate with the
38 fewest votes in each round until there are only 2 or fewer continuing candidates, at which time
39 the candidate with the most votes shall be elected.

40 e. When a ballot has a skipped ranking or repeat candidate ranking for that office, that
41 ballot shall count for its highest-ranked continuing candidate.

42 f. In the case of an overvote involving two or more continuing candidates, the overvote
43 candidates and all subsequently ranked candidates shall not be counted.

44 SECTION 5. Multi-Seat Elections. Each round shall begin by counting each ballot, in
45 whole or in part, for its highest-ranked continuing candidate. Concluded ballots shall not be
46 counted for any continuing candidate. In the first round, each ballot shall count as 1 vote for its
47 highest-ranked continuing candidate, and the election threshold shall be determined by dividing
48 the total number of votes in this round by the number of seats to be elected, rounding down to the
49 nearest whole number, and adding one. Each round shall proceed sequentially as follows:

50 a. If the number of continuing candidates is equal to the remaining number of seats to be
51 elected, all continuing candidates shall be elected, and tabulation shall be complete.

52 b. If any continuing candidate has a number of votes that equals or exceeds the election
53 threshold, the continuing candidate with the most votes shall be elected. If the elected

54 candidate exceeds the threshold, the excess part of each vote received by that candidate
55 shall be counted in the next round for the ballot's next-ranked continuing candidate.

56 c. If no continuing candidate equals or exceeds the election threshold, the candidate with
57 the fewest votes shall be defeated and a new round shall begin.

58 d. When a ballot has a skipped ranking or a repeat candidate ranking for that office, that
59 ballot shall count for its highest-ranked continuing candidate.

60 e. In the case of an overvote involving 2 or more continuing candidates, the overvote
61 candidates and all subsequently ranked candidates shall not be counted.

62 SECTION 6. Tie Votes. If 2 or more candidates are tied for the fewest votes, the
63 continuing candidate with the fewest votes in the immediately prior round, or, if also tied in that
64 round, in the round before that, shall be eliminated. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, if a
65 tie occurs in the first round, or a tie remains in a later round that cannot be resolved with
66 reference to earlier rounds, the tie shall be broken in the manner set forth in the rules
67 promulgated pursuant to section 7 of this act.

68 SECTION 7. Rules. The City Clerk, with the approval of the board, shall promulgate
69 rules necessary to implement this act and ensure the integrity of the RCV process, including but
70 not limited to the following:

71 a. The form of the RCV ballot, including the opportunity to rank at least 1 write-in vote;

72 b. The order in which names of candidates appear on the ballot, provided that any
73 incumbent seeking reelection to the same office shall have the words "candidate for reelection"
74 printed next to their name; and

75 c. A process to resolve tie votes in the first round and ties that cannot otherwise be
76 resolved in the manner set forth in section 6.

77 SECTION 8. Acceptance of Act

78 a. This act shall be submitted to the voters for acceptance at a regular biennial city
79 election occurring on or after November 2, 2027 and at least 6 months after the passage of this
80 act, in the following form, “Shall an act passed by the General Court entitled ‘An Act
81 Authorizing Ranked Choice Voting for Local Elections in the City of Salem’ be accepted?”
82 Below the question shall appear a summary of how RCV will work in the city of Salem, and 1-
83 sentence statements explaining the meaning of a “yes” and “no” vote on the question, prepared
84 by the City Solicitor.

85 b. Sections 1 through 7 of this act shall take effect in the City of Salem only upon
86 acceptance of this act by the voters of the City in the manner provided in section 8.a., and not
87 otherwise.

88 SECTION 9. This act shall take effect upon its passage.