

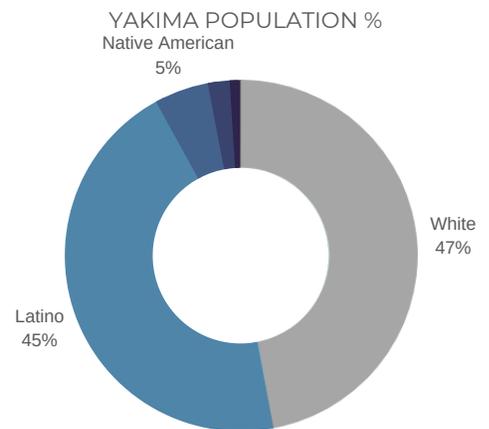


Improving Representation in Yakima County

We all want our families and our neighbors to thrive - whether we are white, black, or brown, live in affluent neighborhoods, or not - whether we've been in the US for generations, or we are newcomers. We ensure that our communities are heard by voting and being involved in our democracy. But in Yakima, our communities are not represented equally because of bias and discrimination, both conscious and unconscious, which divides our communities by race, and an electoral system that encourages competition over collaboration and cooperation. That's why community members have come together to challenge the current voting system - to make it more fair and representative of the diverse communities in Yakima.

What is the problem?

The Latino community makes up almost half of Yakima County and one-third of its citizen voting age population. But only one Latino candidate has ever won a seat on the three-person County Commission, and candidates supported by the Latino community are rarely elected to any political office. This is because Yakima County elects commissioners in a way that favors candidates backed by white voters while disadvantaging candidates backed by Latino voters. The result is that the Latino community is not equally able to elect candidates of choice and the County Commission does not reflect the full diversity of views and people in the community.



Is there a better electoral system we can use?

Yes! Currently, a very narrow majority of the community gets to elect all three commissioners. If we change the system to use ranked choice voting (RCV), then minority voters will also get the opportunity to choose a representative. RCV will make our elections more equitable: **one in three county residents will have the opportunity to elect one of the three commissioners.**

Under the current system:



Under RCV:



RANK CANDIDATES IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE. FILL IN ONE CIRCLE PER CANDIDATE AND ONE CIRCLE PER CHOICE.

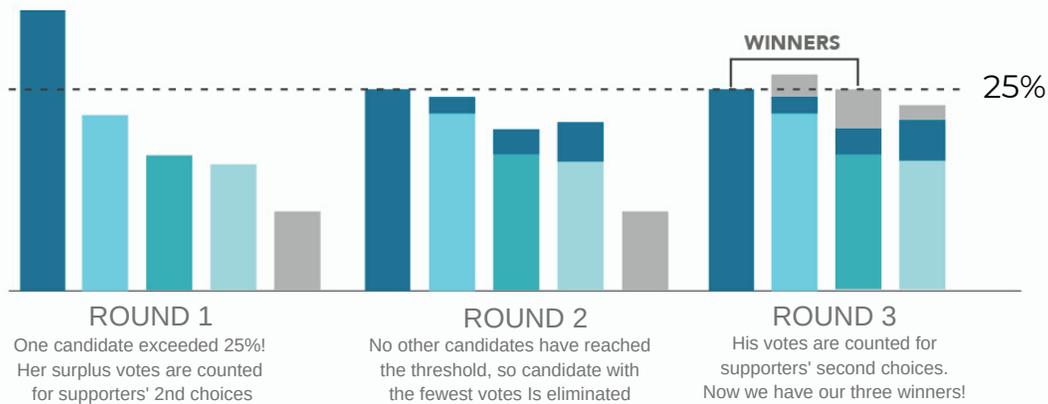
	1ST CHOICE	2ND CHOICE	3RD CHOICE
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CANDIDATE B	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CANDIDATE C	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

What is Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)?

Everyone votes on a ballot where they can say which candidates they prefer in order.

RCV helps to enfranchise minority communities because of the way votes are counted. To elect three commissioners with RCV, each of the winning candidates has to win at least 25% of the votes. Here's how the votes would be tallied:

THREE-WINNER RANKED CHOICE VOTING EXAMPLE ELECTION



What is the notice letter that was just sent to the Yakima County Commissioners?

OneAmerica, along with community activists Evangelina “Bengie” Aguilar, Candy “Dulce” Gutierrez, Rogelio Montez, and Susan Soto Palmer, sent a letter on January 15 to the Yakima County Commission putting them on notice that the current electoral system likely violates the Washington Voting Rights Act. The letter asks the County Commission to work with the community to implement an electoral system that will ensure that Latino voters have equal opportunity to elect candidates of choice.

What is the Washington Voting Rights Act (WVRA)?

The WVRA was signed into law in 2018. It allows voters to hold their elected official to account, by identifying where the electoral system is preventing communities of color from electing their candidates of choice to local jurisdictions (school boards, city/town councils, and county commissions).

The WVRA requires that voters first notify the jurisdiction that they are likely in violation of the WVRA, then to negotiate in good faith with them to find a solution. If no solution can be found within 180 days, then the voter may file a lawsuit to enforce his/her rights in the Superior Court for the County where the jurisdiction is located. Jurisdictions may also voluntarily change their electoral systems to remedy a potential violation of the WVRA.

Who is OneAmerica?

OneAmerica® is the largest immigrant and refugee advocacy organization in Washington State, organizing with and advocating for diverse communities including Latinx, African, and Asian. Initially named Hate Free Zone, OneAmerica was founded immediately after September 11, 2001 to address the backlash, hate crimes, and discrimination against immigrant communities of color, primarily Muslims, Arab Americans, East Africans, and South Asians. Today, OneAmerica plays an active and leading role in state and national coalitions working on immigrant rights, education, economic and environmental justice, voting rights, and immigrant integration. We believe that building broad-based movements led by people of color and their allies and grounded in grassroots community organizing will create a more just, democratic, and compassionate society.

Who are the Campaign Legal Center and MacDonald Hoague & Bayless?

The lawyers! Ruth Greenwood at CLC and Tiffany Cartwright at MHB are representing OneAmerica and the community activists as they negotiate a solution with the County Commissioners. CLC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. CLC holds candidates and government officials accountable regardless of political affiliation. MHB is a civil rights and immigration law firm based in Seattle dedicated to advancing the values of freedom, justice, and equality since its founding in 1952.