

## Approval Voting in North Dakota

### **What is approval voting?**

Approval voting allows you to vote for all the candidates you approve of. Instead of voting for one candidate on your ballot if one office is open, you can vote for any number of candidates you approve of in that race. The candidate who receives the most votes still wins.

### **Is approval voting the same as ranked-choice voting?**

No, you are not ranking the candidates. You are instead voting for any you approve of. **Ranked choice voting isn't used in any North Dakota elections.**

### **Where is approval voting used?**

The City of Fargo is the only jurisdiction in North Dakota that uses approval voting. It was approved by Fargo voters through a citizen-initiated ballot measure and has been used 3 times since to vote for city candidates.

### **Which Fargo city elections does approval voting apply to?**

Approval voting applies to mayor, city commission, and municipal judge elections. It does not apply to school board or park board elections.

### **What is the origin of Fargo's approval voting?**

In 2016, City Commissioners Tony Grindberg and Tony Gehrig proposed a Governance and Elections Task Force, which met publicly 10 times between September 2016 to January 2017. The task force studied various election methods then voted to recommend approval voting to the Fargo City Commission. The Commission didn't take action, so a city ballot initiative was filed to allow Fargo voters to weigh in. Signatures were gathered to place it on the November 2018 ballot.

### **What was the outcome of the vote on the ballot measure?**

Over 47,000 Fargo voters weighed in. There were 30,092 votes in favor of adopting approval voting and 17,282 opposed, which means **63.52% voted in favor of adopting approval voting.**

### **What are the benefits of approval voting?**

Approval voting is simple and straightforward, and there's no additional cost, as it works with current ballot machines. Approval voting is representative of the voters. Voters get to show full support to every candidate they believe in without fear of splitting their vote. Approval voting is especially helpful for Fargo voters when there's a large field of candidates to choose from, such as the June 2022 Fargo City Commission race where 15 candidates ran for 2 open seats.

### **What do Fargo voters think of approval voting?**

According to polling done in June 2020, 71% said approval voting was easy, 62% said overall they liked approval voting, and 62% said they were comfortable with it. 69% said they felt they could vote for their favorite candidate without worrying about "electability."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [electionscience.org/newsroom/fargo-s-first-approval-voting-election-results-and-voter-experience](https://electionscience.org/newsroom/fargo-s-first-approval-voting-election-results-and-voter-experience)