

**The Countback Election:
A Simple Explanation**
by Jonathon Leathers

The Countback Election is a way to fill vacated Senate seats without the President appointing someone or having to hold a special election. Below is an example of how a Countback Election would fill the recent vacancies of Malik and Ruel.

Click here to follow along with this explanation: [Fall 2004 Countback](#).

- 1) Once a Senator vacates, all of the non-elected candidates from the vacating Senator's election are contacted within two days and asked if they would be willing to serve out the rest of that Senator's term should they be elected in the Countback Election. They are given one week to respond at which point the following occurs.
- 2) The ballot data from the election in which the vacating Senator was elected is accessed within three academic days of the end of the one week response period.
- 3) The Countback Election begins by transferring all of the ballots used to elect Malik (513), all of the ballots used to elect Ruel (513), and all of the exhausted ballots from that election (484). The ballots that elected the non-vacating Senators are excluded from the Countback Election as those voters continue to have a serving representative. (Note: 513 was the threshold for the Fall 2004 election).
- 4) The first round of the Countback Election shows all of the transferred votes from Malik's pile, Ruel's pile, and the exhausted pile of ballots. Also notice that all elected and vacating candidates have been excluded from the Countback Election as they obviously cannot be elected again.
- 5) The election then continues until one of the remaining candidates meets the threshold to be elected as a Replacement Senator. In this case, candidate Manteghi is the first to meet the threshold and is thus elected. The next round sees candidate Chin as the only remaining candidate and since two seats must be filled, she is elected by process of elimination. (If a candidate is elected in the Countback Election without receiving at least 50% of the threshold, they will not be elected and instead the President will have authority to choose an interim Senator).
- 6) Assuming a Senator announces their resignation at a Senate meeting, the Countback Election would occur within two weeks and the winner would be announced thereafter. The winner would then be sworn in and assume office two Senate meetings from the time at which the vacancy occurred. (There would only be 2 Senate meetings with an empty seat; the meeting they resign and then the meeting during the one week response period).

** To see how the Ackerman, Barr, Malik and Ruel vacancies would have been filled using a Countback Election, visit:

<http://www.davischoicevoting.org/2005/01/filling-asucd-vacancies-illustrating.php>.