The San Francisco Charter requires that voters be permitted to rank
all candidates in a race.

It in 13.102(b) goes on to say:

"provided, however, if the voting system, vote tabulation system or
similar or related equipment used by the City and County cannot
feasibly accommodate choices equal to the total number of candidates
running for each office, then the Director of Elections may limit the
number of choices a voter may rank to no fewer than three."

The key word is "feasible". It does not imply that it is desirable,
but simply that if the equipment that the City and County utilized was
inadequate to handle more choices than 3 (or some other number) that
the existing equipment could still be used.

13.102(h) states: "any voting system, vote tabulation system, or
similar or related equipment acquired by the City and County shall
have the capability to accommodate this system of ranked-choice, or
"instant runoff," balloting."

The key word is "this". Does that imply that new systems should
maintain existing inadequacies. Of does it imply that new systems
should eliminate the inadequacies of the old equipment - or at minimum
determine the feasibility of overcoming the old inadequacies. Since
it would appear that the whole purpose of the VSTF is to overcome
inadequacies and constraints of the existing system, it would be
remarkable if they did not address this issue.

In the 2010 District 10 Supervisor's race, NO candidate was ranked on
so many as 30% of the ballots, meaning that effectively no candidate
could demonstrate more than plurality support. A "majority" was
manufactured by discarding over half the ballots. Is the purpose of
the VSTF to simply be sure that voting equipment punctiliously follows
the rules, in an auditable fashion - or to ensure that the result
reflects the choice of the electorate.

20% of the ballots in District 10 were irregularly marked in some
fashion, such as repeated rankings, overvoted preferences, skipped
rankings, etc. These indicate likely system failure, even if the
voter deliberately marked the ballot. For example, some voters may
have thought they could game the system by voting for the same
candidate multiple times, or that would prevent their vote from
transferring. In fact, it simply meant that their ballot was
discarded after their single expressed choice was eliminated. Others,
such as those who overvoted, may have been trying to express
information about more of the candidates than your voting system was

capable of accepting. Other voters may have confused "counts" with
"rankings", and thought that a different rank was used for each count
(this confusion occurs among legislators as well. A Hawaii
legislative committee just approved a bill providing for IRV in
special elections. The bill specifies that 4 ranks may be expressed
on ballots, and that the count would terminate after the 4th
tabulation count).

If you were simply given the task of "rank these N candidates" it is
quite unlikely that you would so so in the manner that SF expects
voters to do. You might simply place numerals next to each
candidate's name. If you were doing this with ink, you might discover
some errors, and assign fractional numbers, or draw arrows. And then
you might simply rewrite the list in rank order. It is pretty
unlikely that you would take the list, photocopy it twice and paste
the lists in three columns in a page, and then put an 'X' each column.

Australia allows voters to rank dozens of candidates. Scotland allows
voters to rank candidates by writing numerals on their ballot (these
ballots are machine scanned and tabulated). San Francisco does
neither, because it was trying to make do with its existing equipment,
perhaps influenced by a vendor who told the City and County what was
"feasible".

Summary: The current voting systems used in San Francisco prevent
voters from ranking all candidates was the clear intent of the
charter, and it appears that the voting system causes wide spread
error, or casting of ineffective votes. The VTSF should address these
deficiencies in the current system.
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