



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS			MAILING ADDRESS
John Bickel, President	Melodie Aduja	Chuck Huxel	Stephen O'Harrow	P.O. Box 23404
Alan Burdick, Vice President	Juliet Begley	Jan Lubin	Lyn Pyle	Honolulu
Marsha Schweitzer, Treasurer	Ken Farm	Jenny Nomura		Hawai'i 96823
Doug Pyle, Secretary	Stephanie Fitzpatrick	Dave Nagaji		

March 10 , 2020

TO: Chair Lee and Members of the Judiciary Committee

RE: SB 2006 SD 2 Relating to Ranked Choice Voting

Support for hearing on March 12

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization founded in the 1950s by leading supporters of the New Deal and led by Patsy Mink in the 1970s. We are devoted to the promotion of progressive public policies.

We support SB 2006 SD2 as it would establish ranked choice voting for special federal elections and special elections of vacant county council seats. Without ranked choice voting, a candidate with a plurality of the vote may win even though the candidate is not the choice of the majority of voters. Ranked choice voting allows voters to be more effective in choosing their elected officials. This is especially true if there are three Democrats and one Republican in such a race. The Republican may win with a small percentage of the vote.

Support democracy; support this bill.

John Bickel
President



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
www.lwv-hawaii.com | 808.531.7448 | voters@lwv-hawaii.com | @LWV-Hawaii on Facebook

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Thursday, March 12th, 2020, 2:31pm., Conf. Room 325
SB 2006 SD2, RELATING TO RANKED CHOICE VOTING

TESTIMONY

Janet Mason, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Lee, Vice-Chair San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters offers comments only about this measure, which would establish ranked choice voting for special federal elections and special elections of vacant county council seats.

The League is aware of the use of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) by the Hawaii Democratic Party in its upcoming Presidential Primary¹, the first election of a United States Representative using this process in Maine in 2018², and a rise in its use in municipal elections throughout the country³.

Ranked Choice Voting has the potential for increased turnout, election campaigns that are less polarized, and a representative result - one where the winner receives the majority of votes. The League strongly supports these outcomes.

However, our experience with voter education, including our recent efforts with Vote by Mail, informs us that adoption of a significant change to voting must be accompanied by a comprehensive, well-funded program of voter education. Adoption of Ranked Choice Voting for the elections described in this measure without such educational efforts risks voter confusion which would far outweigh the previously mentioned benefits. We welcome credible efforts to educate voters about Ranked Choice Voting, and welcome experimentation with it among civic groups and political parties

We recognize this bill also proposes a cautious approach by limiting RCV to special Federal elections and special elections for vacant county council seats. We are willing to work with this body and other civic organizations to develop such an educational program to ease the adoption of Ranked Choice Voting, should that be the choice of this legislature.

The passage of Vote by Mail took more than six years and by necessity included a state-funded education and awareness program - one we were happy to help develop. The continued



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
www.lwv-hawaii.com | 808.531.7448 | voters@lwv-hawaii.com | @LWV-Hawaii on Facebook

advocacy and experimentation with Ranked Choice Voting is its own education program - but nothing can replace a voter education program supported by the state government. We are encouraged that the SD2 version of this bill includes a requirement for RCV instructions in election proclamations and direction to conduct voter education.

Should Ranked Choice Voting be adopted for use in elections run by the state, we must apply our lessons from Vote by Mail and educate, educate, educate. **Our voters deserve to know how to correctly complete their ballot and how their vote will be counted.** This bill's explanation of how ballots would be tabulated is thorough. More attention is needed to ballot design and voter instructions about how a voter should complete a ballot. Only through such effort will the potential benefits be realized.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

1. Risch, Emily. "In a win that ensures more votes will count, Hawaii and Kansas to use Ranked Choice Voting Ballots in 2020 Primaries". *FairVote*. https://www.fairvote.org/hawaii_and_kansas_to_use_ranked_choice_voting_ballots_in_2020_primaries, accessed 23 December 2019.

2. Mistler, Steve. "Golden Wins Nation's First Ranked-Choice Voting Runoff for a Congressional Seat". *Maine Public*. <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/golden-wins-nations-first-ranked-choice-voting-runoff-congressional-seat>, accessed 23 December 2019.

3. "Where is Ranked Choice Voting Being Used?". *FairVote*. https://www.fairvote.org/rcv#where_is_ranked_choice_voting_used, accessed 23 December 2019.

Statement Before The
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Thursday, March 12, 2020
2:31 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

in consideration of
SB 2006, SD2
RELATING TO RANKED CHOICE VOTING.

Chair LEE, Vice Chair SAN BUENAVENTURA, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 2006, SD2, which establishes ranked choice voting (RCV) for special federal elections and special elections of vacant county council seats.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to reforming government and strengthening democracy through voting modernization efforts such as adopting RCV.

RCV is a simple electoral reform that ensures fair and efficient elections. In a traditional election, the candidate with the most votes wins, even if they do not receive a majority of the votes. This means voters often feel disengaged and are left to choose between the “lesser of two evils,” or vote for the candidate they feel has the best chance of winning, rather than supporting their favorite candidates.

RCV promotes positive, inclusive and fair elections, which encourages a diversity of candidates. A number of jurisdictions have adopted RCV, including but not limited to Maine for its statewide races and the cities of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, and San Francisco, Oakland and other Bay Area cities in California. See <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/ranked-choice-voting.aspx>.

With RCV, voters rank candidates from favorite to least favorite. On Election Night, first choice votes are counted to determine who voters like the best. If a candidate receives a majority of votes, they win. If no candidate receives a majority, the candidate with the fewest first-choice rankings is eliminated. If your favorite candidate is eliminated, your vote is instantly counted for your next choice. This repeats until one candidate reaches a majority and wins.

In RCV elections, you always get to vote for your favorite candidate, even if they do not have a good chance of winning. If your favorite candidate gets eliminated, then your vote immediately counts for your next choice. You can truly vote your conscience without worrying about wasting your vote. Ranking your 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choices will never hurt your favorite candidate. It simply amplifies your voice in the process.

Cities that have RCV elections have seen a steady increase in voter turnout. When voters feel their vote will matter, they turn out in greater numbers.

In RCV elections, candidates often need 2nd and 3rd choice votes to win a majority of the vote. As such, they will ask for your first choice vote, but if another candidate is your favorite, they will also ask for your second and third choices. Candidates are not likely to get your second or third choice vote if they have been engaging in negative “mudslinging” personal attacks against your favorite candidate.

RCV will require voter education to implement successfully. Common Cause Hawaii hopes that the Office of Elections and Clerks’ Offices are provided with sufficient public education tools and funds to implement RCV and will work cooperatively with the community to disseminate information about RCV.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2006, SD2, and Common Cause Hawaii respectfully urges the committee members to pass SB 2006, SD2 out of your Committee. If you have further questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii





Pono Hawai'i Initiative

Josh Frost - President • Patrick Shea - Treasurer • Kristin Hamada
Nelson Ho • Summer Starr

LATE

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Relating to Ranked Choice Voting
Testifying in Support

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

The Pono Hawai'i Initiative (PHI) **supports SB2006 Relating to Ranked Choice Voting**, which allows for ranked choice voting in special federal elections and special elections for vacant county council seats. These two types of races tend to have large numbers of individuals running which can mean someone winning who has the most votes but only a small percentage of support.

This measure would create a ranking system so that voters can list their choices from favorite to least favorite. If on election night no candidate has a majority of votes, then the candidate with the fewest first-choice rankings is eliminated. If your favorite candidate is eliminated, then your vote is counted for your next choice. This continues until one candidate reaches a majority.

In cities where this type of legislation has been enacted, there has been a steady increase in voter turnout. When a voter feels like their vote actually matters, and their choice has value they tend to continue showing up to vote.

For all these reasons, we urge you to vote in favor of this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity,
Gary Hooser
Executive Director
Pono Hawai'i Initiative

SB-2006-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2020 3:32:33 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/12/2020 2:31:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Scott Smart	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

I OPPOSE ranked-choice voting as it introduces an excessively complex tallying process which will likely result in voter confusion and distrust of results.

It is unclear how election results will be reported. Consider the simplest case of a 3 person contest. Will only the final results (which show the votes for the top only or the top two, depending on "batch elimination") be released? If so, how will a voter have any confidence that his/her vote "counted". After all, in the case of candidate 1 receiving a majority of all votes, candidates 2 and 3 are "batch eliminated" in round 1. If no candidate receives a majority, so round 2 is executed, will "inactive ballots" (likely if a voter only votes for a single candidate) be reported or are they just "lost" in the count. Will the results of round 1 be reported?

The concept that ranked-choice will somehow eliminate "lesser of evil" voting (assuming that there is something wrong using that decision process) is lost on me. I don't see it as effective. It belongs for debate in the Poly Sci faculty lounge, not in our voting process.

SB-2006-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2020 7:36:23 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/12/2020 2:31:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB2006.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

SB-2006-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2020 10:00:38 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/12/2020 2:31:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Edward B Hanel Jr	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Concur with CommonCause Hawaii comments.

SB-2006-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2020 12:35:19 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/12/2020 2:31:00 PM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Brodie Lockard	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Ranked choice voting has many clear advantages over our current voting system, especially in eliminating any need for expensive runoff elections. RCV is simple, fair and efficient. It increases voter turnout. It promotes positive, inclusive elections, and it encourages a diversity of candidates, something Hawaii can always benefit from.

LATE

SB-2006-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/12/2020 5:17:21 AM

Testimony for JUD on 3/12/2020 2:31:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Judiciary,,

I am writing in support of SB2006 SD2.

- RCV is a simple electoral reform that ensures fair and efficient elections. In a traditional election, the candidate with the most votes wins, even if they do not receive a majority of the votes. This means voters often feel disengaged and are left to choose between the “lesser of two evils,” or vote for the candidate they feel has the best chance of winning, rather than supporting their favorite candidates.
- RCV promotes positive, inclusive and fair elections, which encourages a diversity of candidates. A number of jurisdictions have adopted RCV, including but not limited to Maine for its statewide races and the cities of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, and San Francisco, Oakland and other Bay Area cities in California.
See <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/ranked-choice-voting.aspx>.
- With RCV, voters rank candidates from favorite to least favorite. On Election Night, first choice votes are counted to determine who voters like the best. If a candidate receives a majority of votes, they win. If no candidate receives a majority, the candidate with the fewest first-choice rankings is eliminated. If your favorite candidate is eliminated, your vote is instantly counted for your next choice. This repeats until one candidate reaches a majority and wins.
- In RCV elections, you always get to vote for your favorite candidate, even if they do not have a good chance of winning. If your favorite candidate gets eliminated, then your vote immediately counts for your next choice. You can truly vote your conscience without worrying about wasting your vote. Ranking your 2nd, 3rd, and

4th choices will never hurt your favorite candidate. It simply amplifies your voice in the process.

- Cities that have RCV elections have seen a steady increase in voter turnout. When voters feel their vote will matter, they turn out in greater numbers.

We need to implement practical measure to modernize our elections. Please support this bill.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake