



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

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Thursday, February 3, 2022, 9:30 a.m., Via Videoconference
SB 2162, RELATING TO RANKED CHOICE VOTING

TESTIMONY

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

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole, and Committee Members:

This bill would establish ranked choice voting for special federal elections and special elections of vacant county council seats. The League now supports this bill, which proposes that Hawaii introduce ranked choice voting for special Federal elections and for special elections of vacant County Council seats. The limited scope of this bill is appropriate, as this method has not been used before in Hawaii.

Ranked choice voting is appropriate where there are more than two candidates. The method allows voters to choose their candidates in order of preference, by marking candidates as their first, second, third, and subsequent choices, followed by tabulation of votes in rounds, with the lowest-ranked candidates eliminated in each round until there is a candidate who receives the majority of the votes (more than 50%) in a final round and is declared the winner.

Where there are many candidates in the same race and the race is competitive, ranked choice voting has the potential for producing a more representative result where the winner actually receives the majority of votes. However, we hasten to add that for races where this method is not used – even close races – receiving a plurality of votes (rather than a majority of votes) remains a legal and well accepted approach.¹

However, now we are encouraged by survey and exit poll results that have indicated voters find ranked choice voting easy to do and a positive experience.² Each ranked choice ballot should provide clear instructions to voters, as required under this bill. The ballot must be simple and easy to understand for both the voter and election officials. Here we suggest amending the bill to provide that voters may include no more than one write-in candidate on the ballot.

¹ For example In the 2018 Democratic primary race for Lieutenant Governor, there were five candidates, and the winner was Josh Green with 30.2%, followed by Jill Tokuda with 27.5%, Bernard Carvalho with 18.5%, Kim Coco Iwamoto with 13.8% and Will Espero with 6.2%: Source: <https://elections.hawaii.gov/election-results/>.

² Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center: <https://www.rcvresources.org/faq>



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

The League is aware of the use of Ranked Choice Voting by the Hawaii Democratic Party in its 2020 Presidential Primary³, the adoption of it for state and federal races in Alaska last fall,⁴ the adoption of it for Presidential and U.S. Senate seats in Maine's 2020 elections⁵ and a rise in its use in municipal elections throughout the country.⁶ In the past four years Hawaii legislators have also introduced similar proposals to change our electoral system for certain races.

We note that there were seven parties represented in Hawaii's 2020 general election and think ranked choice voting might help our emerging parties gain a foothold. Do we need to consider the effect on rights of political parties for an election that uses the ranked choice method? We note that Maine's ranked choice voting provides that the number of votes cast for a party's candidate is defined as the number of votes credited to that candidate after the initial counting in the first round of tabulation.⁷

We defer to this Committee about whether the current provisions of Hawaii's Constitution (and the provisions of County charters already permit ranked choice voting, or whether a Constitutional amendment (or County charter amendment) would be necessary.

Another consideration is cost, and here we defer to the Office of Elections and the County Clerks about use of this method in the elections specified in this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

³ Shikina, Rob. "Joe Biden Wins Hawaii Democratic Presidential Primary With 63% of Ranked-Choice Votes". *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, 23 May 2020. <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2020/05/23/breaking-news/joe-biden-wins-hawaii-democratic-presidential-primary-with-63-of-ranked-choice-votes/>, accessed 19 February 2021.

⁴ Bohrer, Becky, "Alaska Voters Narrowly Approve Initiative Changing Elections." Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-alaska-legislature-state-elections-general-elections-387ba5f6b3ab79bb841bc5c29c8bceee>, accessed 19 February 2021. Of note, Alaska now joins Maine as the second state to adopt RCV at this level of elections.

⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-senate-elections-voting-maine-united-states-355f2859cf5dabf25bb0bb953f9c66bd>

⁶ "Ranked Choice Voting." National Conference of State Legislatures. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/ranked-choice-voting636934215.aspx>, accessed 19 February 2021.

⁷ https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/bills_127th/billtexts?B000201.asp

Statement Before The
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Thursday, February 3, 2022

9:30 AM

Via Videoconference

in consideration of

SB 2162**RELATING TO RANKED CHOICE VOTING.**

Chair RHOADS, Vice Chair KEOHOKALOLE, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 2162, 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. The Hawaii Democratic Party’s Party-Run Presidential Primary employed RCV in 2020. There are approximately 50 jurisdictions that are using or have adopted some form of RCV. [See https://www.fairvote.org/data_on_rcv#research_snapshot](https://www.fairvote.org/data_on_rcv#research_snapshot) (retrieved Jan. 29, 2022).

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 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 2162, and Common Cause Hawaii respectfully urges the committee members to pass SB 2162 out of your Committee with an effective date upon its approval. If you have further questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

Testimony In Support Of:
SB2162

Submitted by:
Briana Harmon
64-5162C Kamamalu Street
Kamuela, HI 96743

Position: Strong support of SB2162

Aloha,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of SB2162, on ranked choice voting. This bill proposes to implement ranked choice voting for special federal elections and vacant county council seats. Ranked choice voting (RCV) is a voting method in which voters elect candidates based on personal preference. Then if after the votes are counted, no candidate wins over 50% of the votes, the candidate with the least amount of votes is eliminated from the election, and anyone who voted for the eliminated candidate has their votes transferred to their second choice. This process repeats until one candidate wins over 50% of the vote.

I support ranked choice voting because I have researched its use in other states, and have noted the benefits of this voting method. New York City has implemented RCV on a large scale, and they have reported a multitude of benefits. The New York City Civic Engagement Commission have reported that RCV campaigns included less mudslinging, and more attempts to appeal directly to voters. Additionally more women and people of color were elected, and therefore elected officials were more representative of their communities.

The idea of making elected officials more representative of the communities that elected them is especially important in Hawaii. Hawaii's voter turnout has decreased by 54% since Hawaii first gained statehood, and some of the communities that have the lowest voter turnout are Native Hawaiian communities. In 2020 the Office of Hawaiian Affairs surveyed just over 2,000 Native Hawaiians, and found that 50% of the people they surveyed were not even aware of Hawaii's implementation of an all-mail-in-voting process for primary and general elections. A plausible reason that Native Hawaiian communities are not voting is because they don't feel like they can vote for anyone who is really going to represent them, so there is no point in voting. Implementing RCV has proven to allow for elected officials to be more representative of their districts, making RCV a realistic solution to Hawaii's low voter turnout problem, especially within the Native Hawaiian community.

This issue is particularly important to me as a young citizen of Hawaii. The people we elect in these upcoming elections are the people who are going to be the leaders of my future. I want my leaders to be representative of the beliefs of myself and my peers, and not representative of a voting system that elects people based on their electability. So while I know this bill only

implements RCV on a small scale, I believe it can be a segue to a future of leaders who truly are for the people, a future of ranked choice voting.

Ultimately, it is clear that Hawaii struggles to incentivize people to vote, and that change must be made in Hawaii's voting culture. A simple solution to this problem is RCV. RCV will make people able to legitimately use their voice, and to elect someone who they truly believe will represent them. I would love to see Hawaii adopt RCV, so that I can vote in a way that truly represents my beliefs. That is why I support RCV, and you should too.

Thank you,
Briana Harmon

SB2162

The Green Party of Hawai'i would like to add our support for the growing call for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), in the state of Hawai'i. The Green Party of the United States has Instant Run Off Voting (IRV) in its platform under electoral reform. We encourage grassroots democracy and policies that put the power in the hands of the governed. RCV is a step in the correct direction and the passage of SB2162 will begin correcting the imbalance of power we currently have within our government at every level.

Mahalo,

Green Party of Hawai'i

Co-Chair GPH Susan Roberts Emery



Tuesday, February 1, 2022

Relating to Ranked Choice Voting
Testifying in Support

Aloha Chair and members of the committee,

The Pono Hawai'i Initiative (PHI) **supports SB2162 Relating to Ranked Choice Voting. This measure would allow for ranked choice voting in special federal elections and for vacant county council seats.**

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Gary Hooser
Executive Director
Pono Hawai'i Initiative

SB-2162

Submitted on: 1/28/2022 3:34:18 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB2162.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

SB-2162

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 7:55:42 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I have long hoped for such a bill which would allow us to vote for those we'd like despite chances and have opinions known rather than having narrow choices. There are many reasons for such a bill including inducing more enthusiasm for voting, as votes may be heard better. I understand this is a priority for Common Cause, so I'm sure their reasons are elaborate and valid.

SB-2162

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 9:26:27 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Kauanoë Batangan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support SB2162 because ranked choice voting promotes positive, inclusive and fair elections, which encourages a diversity of candidates.

In RCV elections, you always get to vote for your favorite candidate. 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.

SB-2162

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 8:45:23 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Lisa Huynh Eller	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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. The Hawaii Democratic Party’s Party-Run Presidential Primary employed RCV in 2020. There are approximately 50 jurisdictions that are using or have adopted some form or RCV.

SB-2162

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 11:46:03 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Hello,

My name is Nanea Lo. I support SB2162.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo

SB-2162

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 4:12:07 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Susan Dursin	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please support SB2162, which would establish ranked choice voting in special federal elections and vacant county council seats. The process makes good sense in ensuring election credibility. In the present system, a candidate often wins without having garnered a majority of votes. With ranked choice, the voter can feel that at least he is represented by a candidate who is acceptable to the majority of voters and, most likely, to herself.

Ranked choice promotes a diversity of candidates since they do not have to be from the two major parties. It seems to reduce negative campaigning since voters do not like to hear unreasonable attacks on their favored candidate. That also means less advertisement money spent on negative campaigning.

Four countries, including Australia, Ireland, Malta and New Zealand, use ranked choice voting in their federal elections. Eleven U.S. cities, including San Francisco and Minneapolis, use it to elect city officers. Here in Hawai'i the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary used ranked choice voting with no problems.

Please support SB2162. This is a good, limited step forward.

Will Caron
Pālolo Valley
willcaronforhawaii@gmail.com

January 31, 2022
TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary
RE: Testimony in Support of SB2162

Aloha Committee Members,

Please support SB2162, which would implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for special federal elections and special elections of vacant county council seats.

RCV is simply a different method for tallying votes in a democratic election. RCV uses multiple rounds of tallying to sort candidates by their broadest level of support, resulting in an elected candidate that is closest to what the majority of voters want.

With RCV, voters can rank candidates in order of preference. This ranking means that voters won't have to worry about "wasting" their vote on a candidate who may be more appealing, but has a low chance of winning—especially in a crowded race. If your favorite candidate has limited support, your vote will still count for your next choice.

This has the added benefit of giving candidates more incentive to run campaigns based on their values and not just what they think most people want to hear, encouraging a diversity of opinions and viewpoints.

RCV also encourages candidates to engage positively with the supporters of other candidates, since those voters could still choose to rank a given candidate second or third rather than lower down on the list. This kind of broad base-building therefore becomes more important to winning, placing the emphasis on community engagement and not just speaking into echo chambers. In this way, the candidate who emerges victorious is guaranteed to have the broadest possible support every time.

We know RCV works because it's been successfully used in dozens of jurisdictions at many different levels of government for years, and even decades in some cases. The Democratic Party of Hawai'i successfully used RCV in its most recent Presidential Preference Poll. There's no reason not to at least try it out in a limited fashion, as this bill allows.

Mahalo for the opportunity to support this important measure.

SB-2162

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 7:10:52 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
David Anderson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Ranked Choice voting (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. The Hawaii Democratic Party’s Party-Run Presidential Primary employed RCV in 2020. There are approximately 50 jurisdictions that are using or have adopted some form of RCV.

With RCV, voters rank candidates from favorite to least favorite.

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.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this bill.

SB-2162

Submitted on: 2/2/2022 5:59:39 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Daniel R Freund	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

In recent years we've seen the destructive results elsewhere when folks are elected to office with less than majority approval. And we've seen the cynicism of one party funding spoilers to split the other party's votes. The time to enact this common sense legislation is now, before this political pandemic reaches Hawaii.

- Dan Freund / 5609A Honua Rd. / Kapaa



AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS		MAILING ADDRESS	
John Bickel, President	Melodie Aduja	Jan Lubin	Bill South	P.O. Box 23404
Alan Burdick, Vice President	Keola Akana	John Miller	Zahava Zaidoff	Honolulu
Dave Nagajji, Treasurer	Juliet Begley	Jenny Nomura		Hawaii 96823
Doug Pyle, Secretary	Stephanie Fitzpatrick	Stephen O'Harrow		

February 2, 2022

TO: Chair Rhoads Committee

RE: SB 2162 Relating to Ranked Choice Voting

Support for a Hearing on February 3

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.

Americans for Democratic Action Hawaii supports this bill as it would as it would establish ranked-choice voting for special federal elections and special elections of vacant county council seats. First-past-the post elections where there are a number of candidates from one Party and only one candidate from a second Party give the advantage to the minority Party candidate; this is not democratic. This bill sets up a more democratic system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Bickel, President

LATE

SB-2162

Submitted on: 2/2/2022 12:12:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Gerald Gordner	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support the use of ranked-choice voting in elections at all levels.

The only drawback of this bill is that per 1.11.a it does not cover primary elections. Primaries often include more than 2 candidates and are notorious for vote-splitting--the process by which two or more moderate candidates which most people support "split" the vote and are defeated by a fringe candidate with a small but united following. RCV solves that problem. Therefore, I would encourage the committee to amend this bill to include primaries if politically feasible.

LATE

Rob Richie
President and CEO, FairVote Action
6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 240
Takoma Park, MD 20912
301-270-4616

Testimony from:
Rob Richie

In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2162

February 2, 2022

Hawaii Senate Judiciary Committee

Testimony in favor of SB2162, February 2022

Dear members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express FairVote Action's support for Senate Bill 2162, which establishes ranked choice voting in special federal and county council elections. This bill will improve Hawaii's democracy by ensuring fairer, more representative outcomes in crowded special elections. Further, ranked choice voting will 1) offer voters more choices on their ballots, 2) promote positive, issues-focused campaigns that reward candidates for engaging with voters, and 3) level the playing field for female candidates and candidates of color.

FairVote Action is a national nonpartisan organization that educates and advocates for electoral system reforms that improve our elections. We are seen as a leading national resource on ranked choice voting (RCV). I have led FairVote as Executive Director since 1992 and now I am President and CEO of FairVote and FairVote Action.

Approximately ten million voters in 55 jurisdictions across the U.S. vote using ranked choice voting. It has become the fastest-growing and most bipartisan electoral reform in the country. Just in the past two years:

- New York City held the largest citywide RCV races in U.S. history and conducted a successful voter education campaign which resulted in high voter participation and a low error rate.
- Hawaii was one of five states to use RCV ballots for its 2020 Democratic presidential primaries.
- Voters approved RCV ballot initiatives in all ten cities that voted on RCV in 2020 and 2021.
- State legislatures in Utah, Virginia, and Colorado passed local options legislation to allow municipalities to begin using RCV. In 2021, twenty Utah cities used RCV in municipal elections, 19 of them for the first time. These cities opted in after the state enacted local options legislation.

- The Virginia Republican Party used RCV to nominate candidates for statewide office and went on to win the offices of governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general.

Ranked choice voting is particularly well-suited for crowded fields, such as those often seen in special elections to fill vacancies. RCV ensures that elections are won with majorities without the need for costly, inefficient runoff elections. In RCV elections, voters rank candidates in order of choice: their first choice, with an option to rank backup preferences as a second choice, third choice and so on. If a candidate receives more than half of the first choices, they win, just like any other election. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as ‘number 1’ will have their votes count for their next choice. The process continues until two candidates remain.

Winners in RCV elections always have a majority of the vote when matched head-to-head against their final opponent, and most RCV victors have even more than majority support. Most RCV winners are ranked in the top 3 choices by two-thirds of voters or more, demonstrating a measure of broad consensus among voters. Winners of RCV races usually earn the most first choices as well.

RCV addresses the problems of “vote-splitting” and “spoiler” candidates. Under our current system, a majority of voters may support a particular ideology, but split their votes among candidates who support that ideology – resulting in a winner whose views reflect the minority of voters. For example, Green Party candidates Jill Stein and Ralph Nader won enough votes to affect the outcomes in key swing states in the 2016 and 2000 presidential elections.¹² In ranked choice voting elections, voters could rank the Green candidate 1st and then rank either the Democratic or Republican candidate as their 2nd choice. Their votes would not be “wasted.” Instead, they would be counted in the final tally and would count for the next candidate who best represents the voter’s values, rather than accidentally helping elect the candidate they want least.

One of the most powerful aspects of RCV is that it offers voters greater choice, creating space for both voters and candidates to express a wide range of views. Voters may rank as many or as few candidates as they like but, in practice, most voters choose to use multiple rankings in order to express their full preferences. Typically, over 70% of voters choose to rank multiple candidates³. In highly competitive or highly publicized elections, the rate is even higher. For example, 89% of New York City voters ranked multiple candidates for mayor in 2021.

Voters like and understand RCV. Exit polling results find that voters in RCV cities overwhelmingly report that they like RCV and prefer it to their previous voting method.⁴ Exit polling in Utah found that 81% of first-time RCV voters found RCV easy to use and 88% were satisfied with the method they used to cast their ballot⁵. In New York City, 95% of poll respondents found the ballot simple and 77% want to keep

¹ Presidential election in Michigan, 2016. Ballotpedia.

https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_election_in_Michigan,_2016

² November 7, 2000 General Election. Florida Department of State. Division of Elections.

<https://results.elections.myflorida.com/SummaryRpt.asp?ElectionDate=11/7/2000&Race=PRE&DATAMODE=>

³ Data on Ranked Choice Voting. FairVote. (2021). https://www.fairvote.org/data_on_rcv#research_ballotuse

⁴ FairVote. 2020. Exit Surveys: Voters Evaluate Ranked Choice Voting.

<https://fairvote.app.box.com/s/hlzeu53uw0nrw9yzhbjk4flx2uf9x4fg>

⁵ Survey shows positive response to ranked choice voting. The Daily Herald. (2021).

<https://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/2021/nov/18/survey-shows-ranked-choice-voting-got-positive-response-in-pilot-test/>

using RCV.⁶ Understanding of RCV is comparable to plurality voting and better than the “top-two” voting used in California and Washington.⁷ Researchers have found no evidence of racial or ethnic differences in understanding of RCV.⁸

Research shows that RCV decreases negative campaigning because candidates need to reach beyond a single base in order to win. Sometimes, this means appealing to be the second or third choice of voters who support a different candidate as their first choice. Studies have found that candidates use more positive language in debates⁹, voters in RCV cities perceived less negativity compared to voters in non-RCV cities^{10,11}, and newspaper articles in RCV cities are more positive than in non-RCV cities¹².

Recent research has found that RCV tends to result in greater election rates for women and candidates of color.^{13,14} A recent FairVote report also found that voters of color are more likely to rank multiple candidates on their ballots.¹⁵ The Department of Justice recently settled on a form of RCV to resolve a voting rights case in Michigan.¹⁶

RCV’s simplicity, representative outcomes, and positive experience for voters have made it an increasingly popular election method. Recommended by Robert’s Rules of Order and used in hundreds of private association elections, RCV is fully constitutional, having been twice upheld in federal courts, including in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2011 and in federal district courts in Maine in 2018 and 2020.

⁶ Rank the Vote NYC Releases Edison Research Exit Poll on the Election. Rank the Vote NYC. (2021). http://readme.readmedia.com/RANK-THE-VOTE-NYC-RELEASES-EDISON-RESEARCH-EXIT-POLL-ON-THE-ELECTION/17989282?utm_source=newswire&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=media_pr_emails

⁷ 2014 Eagleton Poll California RCV Survey Results. FairVote. (2021). <https://www.fairvote.org/2014-survey-results>.

⁸ Self-Reported Understanding of Ranked-Choice Voting. Donovan, T., Tolbert, C. and Gracey, K. (2019), Social Science Quarterly, 100: 1768-1776. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12651>.

⁹ Effect of Instant Run-off Voting on Participation and Civility. McGinn, E. (2020). http://eamonmcginn.com.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/papers/IRV_in_Minneapolis.pdf

¹⁰ Socioeconomic and Demographic Perspectives on Ranked Choice Voting in the Bay Area. John, S. & Tolbert, C. (2015). <https://fairvote.app.box.com/v/perspectives-on-rcv-bay-area>

¹¹ Santa Fe Voters Support Ranked Choice Voting and Have High Confidence in City Elections. FairVote. (2018). <https://fairvote.app.box.com/v/SantaFeExitReport>

¹² Using Campaign Communications to Analyze Civility in Ranked Choice Voting Elections. Kropf, M. (2021). <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/4293>

¹³ In Ranked Choice Elections, Women Win, RCV in the United States: A Decade in Review. Represent Women. (2020). https://www.representwomen.org/research_voting_reforms.

¹⁴ The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities? John, S., Smith, H., & Zack, E. (2018). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261379417304006>

¹⁵ Ranked Choice Voting Elections Benefit Candidates and Voters of Color. Otis, D., Dell, N., Zawora, C., & Danaf, O. (2021) https://www.fairvote.org/report_rcv_benefits_candidates_and_voters_of_color

¹⁶ Justice Department Reaches Agreement with City of Eastpointe, Michigan, Under the Voting Rights Act. U.S. Justice Department. (2019) <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-agreement-city-eastpointe-michigan-under-voting-rights-act>

The issue of RCV has come before the Hawaii Legislature in previous years. However, the evidence has never been so strong that voters like RCV and engage with the ranked ballot, parties can produce strong nominees with RCV, and implementation is a smooth process.¹⁷

For example, 20 cities in Utah used RCV in 2021, 19 of them for the first time. This included large cities like Salt Lake City and smaller towns of only a few hundred voters. After a voter education campaign partially funded by the lieutenant governor's office, county clerks efficiently administered the RCV elections. Administrators released RCV results on election night alongside results from non-RCV races, including visualizations of the round-by-round results.

Importantly, many voters in Hawaii already have experience with RCV. In 2020, the Hawaii Democratic Party used RCV for its presidential primary. Hawaii voters took advantage of the opportunity to rank multiple candidates, made very few ballot errors, and turned out in large numbers. In a year when nearly 3 million early voters in states without RCV cast ballots for presidential candidates who had already withdrawn by the time ballots were counted, RCV made more votes count – in Hawaii and the four other states using RCV in their presidential primaries.¹⁸

FairVote is available to answer any other questions from the committee or provide additional data. FairVote can also advise the legislature as it deems fit and be a resource for RCV implementation. You can reach me at rr@fairvoteaction.org and my FairVote Action colleagues at info@fairvoteaction.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Rob Richie
President and CEO of FairVote Action

¹⁷ Additional resources on RCV implementation are available from the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center at www.RCVResources.org.

¹⁸ Ranked Choice Voting in 2020 Presidential Primary Elections. FairVote. (2020). Available at https://www.fairvote.org/ranked_choice_voting_in_2020_presidential_primary_elections

Ranked Choice Voting Ballot: Maine Democratic 2018 Primary for Governor

Here is the ballot used in Maine for its Democratic primary election in the governor in 2018 that resulted in the nomination of Janet Mills. Turnout hit an all-time high.

Governor	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	6th Choice	7th Choice	8th Choice
Cote, Adam Roland Sanford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dion, Donna J. Biddeford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dion, Mark N. Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eves, Mark W. North Berwick	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mills, Janet T. Farmington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russell, Diane Marie Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sweet, Elizabeth A. Hallowell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Write-in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

RCV Election Example: *Maine Congressional Elections, 2018*

Maine, 2nd U.S. House District Ranked choice Voting Election, November 2018			
Candidate	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Jared Golden Democrat	45.5%	46.2%	50.5%
	128,999 votes	130,182 votes	139,231 votes
Bruce Poliquin Republican	46.4%	47.1%	49.5%
	131,631 votes	132,505 votes	136,326 votes
Tiffany Bond Independent	5.7%	6.7%	<i>Defeated</i>
	16,260 votes	18,831 votes	
Will Hoar Independent	2.4%	<i>Defeated</i>	
	6,753 votes		