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To Whom It May Concern,

The concept of a mandate has been established for thousands of years: in ancient China, they followed the "Mandate of Heaven," where they believed that a divine right to rule was bestowed upon their emperors. In our more modern civilization, we ascribe to a mandate of the people, in which our leaders are elected by popular vote. The only issue with this is that our current method of voting does not always and consistently produce the candidate with the greatest level of support as the winning candidate. In order to ensure that our candidates have a true mandate of the people, with a majority (over 50%) favoring their candidacy, we must look to Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV).

I'll give you a clear example of how our current system, first-past-the-post voting, has recently failed to create a mandate in Connecticut. According to the Secretary of the State's Office, in the 2018 election, now-Governor Ned Lamont and Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz received 48.1% of the vote on the Democratic line and 1.27% of the vote on the Working Families line, totaling 49.37% of the vote. This means that over half of all votes cast in the State of Connecticut were against Governor Lamont rather than in his favor.

While first-past-the-post voting simply ignores this fact and says that candidates who did not capture so much as half the population's interest should be elected Governor and Lt. Governor, Ranked-Choice Voting is a cost-effective, easy way for us to get to the bottom of the question: if candidates like Oz Griebel (U) and Rodney Hanscomb (L) didn't run, who would those votes have been cast in favor of? On the other hand, might there have been an outpouring of support for a non-major party candidate if people didn't feel like a vote for Griebel was a vote thrown directly into a trash can?

Right now, we don't know, and we had leadership from 2018 - 2022 that one could easily argue does not have a true mandate of the people. Under Ranked-Choice Voting, we would be told who Griebel and Hanscomb supporters would have preferred if the only options were Lamont and Stefanowski.

How can we defend our current democratic practices in the event that those voters would have preferred Stefanowski to Lamont? In order to ensure that the will of the people is executed, we have no choice: we must wholly embrace Ranked-Choice Voting. We owe it to ourselves, and we owe it to every last member of the public who goes to the polls with their heart on their sleeves and a hope that they will see a Connecticut of which they can be more proud.

While I voted for Lamont myself in 2018, I believe wholeheartedly that the will of a majority of the people, not a plurality of the people, should be the metric by which we choose our state and local leaders – even if it means that my candidate loses in the end. I hope that you will all search your hearts and minds and come to the conclusion that I have: we need Ranked-Choice Voting, and we needed it in 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Joshua Steele Kelly