

voter choice connecticut

November 6, 2024

Senator Osten, Senator Hwang and distinguished members of the Governor's Ranked Choice Voting Working Group:

I am a co-founder of Voter Choice Connecticut, the all-volunteer citizens group that came together in December, 2018 with the goal of bringing Ranked Choice Voting to Connecticut. I appear before you today to encourage the Working Group to propose legislation to implement RCV for state, federal and municipal elections in Connecticut.

In 2019, HB-5820, *An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Ranked-Choice Voting*, passed the House. Bills to study and/or implement Ranked Choice Voting have been introduced every year since, demonstrating a sustained interest within the CT General Assembly to advance what I consider a "must have" election reform.

The last time I testified on this topic was in 2020, shortly before the pandemic brought the legislative session to an abrupt halt. Since then, our democracy has been subjected to unprecedented challenges, no more so than evidenced by this week's presidential election which has profound implications for our constitutional democracy now and in the future.

Not since the civil war has there been such an urgent need to shore up the foundations of our democracy. Ranked Choice Voting is widely considered to be an election reform that can help meet that challenge. Legal scholar and Yale graduate Edward Foley [called](#) RCV the election reform "most likely to save democracy."

To have a resilient, representative democracy, I believe four conditions must be met:

- Barriers to voting are minimized to allow all eligible citizens to exercise their freedom to vote without fear or intimidation;
- The voting franchise is expanded to all adult citizens;
- Measures and systems are in place to ensure the integrity of our elections, including accurately counting every vote, making every vote matter, securing elections from threats domestic and foreign and holding to account those who try to subvert our free and fair elections; and lastly
- Winners are selected so that election outcomes are truly representative of the electorate.

Connecticut has made significant progress against the first three conditions, especially with respect to making it easier to vote. We saw this again on Tuesday when a majority of voters approved an amendment to the state constitution to allow the legislature to implement no-excuse absentee voting.

ranked choice voting.
better elections for connecticut.

But strengthening our democracy requires more; it requires that winning candidates better reflect the will of the people. That is what Ranked Choice Voting delivers. It assures that a true consensus candidate is elected by requiring that winners are preferred by a majority of voters. It eliminates the unintended and harmful consequences of first-past-the-post elections, especially vote-splitting in crowded fields and compelling voters to cast ballots for their less-favored candidate in order to prevent their least-preferred candidate from winning, the so-called “spoiler” effect.

Ranked Choice Voting also brings with it greater representation of historically under-represented constituencies. More [women](#), [Black and Hispanic](#) candidates win in jurisdictions using RCV and voter participation [increases](#) as well.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the civic engagement organization that has been around for nearly 250 years, [recommends](#) Ranked Choice Voting as a key strategy to achieve “equality of voice and representation.” It’s within your Working Group’s power to help deliver on that aspiration. In particular, by proposing legislation to implement, in an orderly fashion over time, Ranked Choice Voting for federal, state and municipal elections.

I recognize that some legal experts, including the Attorney General, believe that a constitutional amendment is required for RCV to be used for statewide offices and the CT General Assembly. However, the AG [noted](#) it was a “close call” and others have come to a different conclusion, including an informal opinion Voter Choice Connecticut received from a prominent national election law firm. Notably, the AG’s opinion did not touch on the use of RCV for federal elections.

I agree that using RCV first in primary elections and offering a municipal option is a good approach for familiarizing the electorate and election administrators with this election reform. However, I urge the Working Group to push for broader adoption to more fully realize the profound benefits it brings to improving our representative democracy.

I appreciate the work done by this bi-partisan Working Group, and appreciate your consideration of my testimony.

Jonathan Perloe
Co-founder, Voter Choice Connecticut