

Good morning, and thanks for holding this important hearing today, particularly in the week of the election!

My name is Sarah Ganong and I'm the state director of Connecticut Working Families Party, a minor party focused on ensuring that the concerns of working-class Connecticut residents, not just the wealthy and well-connected, are heard at the ballot box.

Our state has already taken some great strides toward policies that increase voter participation and access, and diversify the candidates represented – from the Citizens Election Program to fusion voting to, recently, early voting. Our organization has concerns about proposals for ranked choice voting beyond party primaries and allowing implementation in municipalities, and I'd also like to propose what we consider to be more impactful and urgent voting system reforms.

In general elections, ranked choice voting increases complexity and confusion without increasing representation or resources for candidates.

RCV weakens accountability and hinders governance by weakening political parties:

RCV can diminish the influence of political parties by encouraging candidates to focus on personal campaigns rather than aligning with clear party platforms. This fragmentation can lead to a lack of cohesion, where elected officials are less accountable to the broader goals of their party. Strong political parties are essential for creating unified agendas and ensuring that elected representatives are committed to their party's principles, which fosters stability and consistent governance, and peaceful transfers of power.

RCV places candidates at the center of the campaign, not party platforms or agendas. As a result, it tends to favor better resourced (often self-funded) or known candidates with more name recognition, putting grassroots or minority candidates at a disadvantage.

RCV does not empower third parties: while RCV can make a lot of sense in party primaries, especially presidential party primaries where the candidates' positions are well defined, it general elections does not give third party candidates the exposure to connect with a larger slice of the electorate, or increase minor parties' influence on government in the way that fusion does.

In Connecticut, our existing system of fusion voting allows voters to express their values while still supporting a candidate likely to actually win and be a participant in governing. Fusion allows parties to bring together voters with shared values and a shared agenda, and make choices about which candidates to support based on that cohesive agenda. If RCV is implemented, fusion voting must be protected.

I'd also like to take just a moment to propose a few ideas that Working Families Party believes would do more to educate voters and expand the electorate and improve our voting systems than ranked choice voting in general elections.

- **Public financing thresholds should be altered**, to ensure that self-funding candidates do not have an unfair advantage, and to allow more third party candidates to get a message out.
- **Public financing should extend to municipal races**, to ensure candidates can get their message out in equal terms.
- **Contribution limits by Political Action Committees to political parties should be raised**, to ensure they have the resources to educate voters and manage complex, multiparty contests.
- Minor parties with a proven track record in gubernatorial elections should receive automatic ballot access for presidential races
 - Parties which have gained ballot access to one statewide race (Governor, US Senate) should be able to have the same access to all statewide races
 - Signature collection deadlines for primary and general election candidates should be extended.
- **Ballot Guides** and other educational materials from the state have proven effective in driving up voter participation in other states.
- **No excuse absentee ballots** should be codified and funded during the next legislative session
- Additional funding must be provided to educate voters and support municipalities in expanding the number of voting sites and staff during our new early voting period

While on paper RCV in general elections seems appealing, Connecticut must first focus on reforms that genuinely enhance representation—strengthening public financing, empowering political parties, and preserving fusion voting. These measures ensure that every voter, regardless of background, has a meaningful voice in the electoral process.

Thank you so much for your time and attention to this important matter, and I'll refer you to my written testimony for further thoughts. Have a good weekend.