

Dear Members of the Governor's Working Group on Ranked Choice Voting,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts on the benefits of implementing Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Connecticut. As a former State Senator and a participant in our party primary process, I've seen firsthand the challenges and potential limitations within our current system. I am convinced that RCV offers Connecticut an opportunity to enhance the integrity, stability, and fairness of our elections, particularly in ways that encourage broader support and engagement from voters across the political spectrum.

Ranked Choice Voting is a sensible, practical improvement to our electoral process, one that ensures the broadest possible support for elected officials. It does so by requiring a majority rather than a mere plurality, a shift that encourages candidates to appeal to a wider audience. This concept aligns with the fundamental principle that elected officials should govern with a mandate reflective of the voters' collective will. RCV isn't about changing the core of our democracy—it's about refining it to better serve the needs of today's voters while preserving our state's political stability.

In observing discussions within the working group, including the recent insights shared during the meetings in July and August, it is clear that RCV reduces the "spoiler effect" often seen in crowded primary races, particularly within party primaries. This effect can inadvertently divide the vote among similar candidates, allowing one to win without a broad base of support. By allowing voters to rank their choices, RCV eliminates this unintended consequence, making for an election that is fairer and more representative of the majority's views.

This benefit is not theoretical. In Virginia, for example, the GOP has implemented RCV in its own nomination processes, leading to a more collaborative and unified approach among candidates. Virginia Republicans have noted that RCV has helped them select candidates who appeal broadly across different factions, ensuring stronger nominees who represent a majority of party members. Connecticut would be wise to follow this example, as this approach could help both major parties here build stronger coalitions and foster an environment that rewards consensus rather than division.

Moreover, RCV provides an essential solution to an issue that affects voters' confidence in our electoral system—ensuring majority support. As observed in the working group's August meeting, there is a clear benefit to a system that does not allow candidates to win with only a small portion of the vote. When elected officials hold office by virtue of broad-based support, they have a stronger mandate to govern, which leads to greater trust in our institutions and elected leaders.

One of the most practical aspects of RCV is the flexibility it allows municipalities to adopt it on a local level if they so choose. Providing Connecticut's towns and cities with this option enables communities to decide for themselves whether RCV is a suitable method for their local elections. This flexibility respects the unique needs of each community, empowering local decision-making without imposing a mandate from the state level. As a former local leader, I

recognize the value of allowing municipalities this freedom to determine what best serves their residents.

In a time of increasing polarization, RCV also brings a marked improvement to the tone of campaigns. It encourages candidates to engage respectfully with a broad cross-section of voters, knowing they may need to appeal to those who might not select them as a first choice.

The discussions during the September working group meeting reinforced the idea that RCV has the potential to cultivate a more constructive political environment, one where candidates are incentivized to seek common ground rather than relying solely on division.

In closing, I strongly encourage this working group to recommend the adoption of RCV in Connecticut for presidential preference primaries, party primaries, and as an option for municipal elections. This approach will provide a path for electing officials who genuinely reflect the majority's will, foster a more collaborative political landscape, and respect the autonomy of our local governments. It is a practical reform that strengthens our democratic institutions while preserving the principles that matter to Connecticut residents.

Thank you for considering this important reform.

Sincerely,

Art Linares