



Chairs Senator Osten and Senator Hwang, Vice-chair Frank and Members of the Ranked Choice Voting Working Group. My name is Cheri Quickmire, Executive Director of Common Cause in CT and a member of this working group. Common Cause in Connecticut is a non-partisan organization dedicated to advocating for an open, accountable, and transparent government that works for all of us. We are a non-profit citizens' lobby that has worked to improve the way Connecticut's government operates since 1971. We have 1.5 million members nationwide and more than 15,000 members and activists in Connecticut. Common Cause in Connecticut has a long history of working to increase transparency in government and advocating for the removal of the corrosive influence of special interest money in government and politics and election reform.

It has been my pleasure to work with all of you on this working group. We have covered considerable ground in reviewing Ranked Choice Voting options, gaining a better understanding of its proven advantages and challenges, learning from other state policymakers and candidates, and debating amongst ourselves, what might work in our State. I believe the legislative proposal we end up with will build momentum towards implementing a system of RCV in CT.

Like many in our group, Common Cause in Connecticut supports a ranked choice voting proposal that is implemented every four years in our Presidential primary and gives municipalities and political parties the option to use this system in caucuses, conventions, primaries and certain municipal elections if they choose.

While we understand ranked choice voting is purported to be confusing and more challenging for voters, this has not proven to be the case in the [62+ municipalities and jurisdictions and several states](#) where it has been used. In fact, according to the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center, [post election surveys and exit polls indicate that voters find it quite easy to do once they understand it.](#) Education on the options available in the RCV system as outlined in participating states will be critical to ensuring that voters understand RCV. Financial support for the Secretary of the State and local election officials to administer the system should be included in any proposal from this Working Group.

If this election cycle has shown us anything, we can certainly see that our 'choose-one' system of elections deprives voters of meaningful choices, creates toxic campaign cycles, advances candidates who lack broad support, and leaves voters often feeling like our voices are not heard.

In terms of motivating historically disenfranchised voters to participate in our democracy that has never equitably represented them, there is evidence that RCV not only benefits but appeals to women and to Black, brown and other voters of color.

Research and case studies compiled by [FairVote](#) and [RepresentWomen](#) on past RCV elections has uncovered these noteworthy points:

- Black, brown and other voters of color tend to rank more candidates than white voters;
- RCV elections enable communities of voters to elect representative candidates even if their top choices differ because voters don't have to worry about choosing between like-minded candidates and "splitting votes";
- Candidates of color and women won over two-thirds of New York City's council seats after winning 2021 RCV primaries - a sharp increase from 2017 and 2013;
- Maine's first woman governor, Gov. Janet Mills, won her 2018 RCV primary election with 54% of the vote—higher than any Democratic candidate since the 1980's;
- Turnout in New York City in 2021 increased by 36% over the previous open-seat mayoral race, and a higher share of voters who participated in the mayoral election also voted in down-ballot races
- 94% of Santa Fe, NM voters were satisfied with their first RCV experience

Other benefits of RCV include assurances that elected officials are supported by a true majority of voters and not just a small fraction, the winner has broad-based appeal, candidates are incentivized to appeal to a broader range of voters, the spoiler effect or voter frustration that their vote was wasted is eliminated, voters are given more choice, campaigns are more likely to engage in positive campaigns centering on issues and there is often less polarization with this type of system.

We believe RCV is common sense policy that if implemented for presidential primaries with options for parties and municipalities to participate, could help to broaden our State's democracy.

I look forward to working together as the legislative session begins. Thank you.