

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

My name is Henry Rowland with Veterans for All Voters, where I lead the Connecticut Task Force. I served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army, deploying to both Iraq and Afghanistan, and my experiences have deeply shaped my commitment to strengthening our democracy. Veterans like me know firsthand the cost of public service, and we continue to believe in a government that reflects and serves all its people. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a critical reform to help realize that vision, and I urge you to support bringing it to Connecticut.

RCV is a simple and effective way to ensure that our electoral system reflects the preferences of all voters, even those who vote early, like many of our military personnel. Active-duty service members stationed overseas often vote weeks before Election Day due to deployment schedules, and many cast ballots before the candidate field has settled. By Election Day, candidates they supported might no longer be in the race, leaving their votes essentially wasted. RCV would change that by allowing these voters to rank candidates in order of preference, ensuring their votes still count toward their next choice if their top choice is no longer in the race. For military personnel who sacrifice so much to defend our democratic process, RCV offers a straightforward way to ensure their voices aren't left out.

The larger goal of RCV aligns directly with Veterans for All Voters' mission to "unlock competition, make our politics less polarizing, and our government more effective." As I wrote in an opinion editorial last year, our military's effectiveness depends on clear, stable political guidance that reflects consistent public will. RCV, by its design, would foster broad coalition-building and encourage candidates to appeal to a majority of voters. Our current "winner-takes-all" system often forces voters to choose strategically, not sincerely, which can elect leaders that do not have majority support, resulting in policies that are misaligned with the will of the majority of the people. By contrast, RCV enables voters to choose candidates they truly believe in, while still ensuring a fair and accurate result.

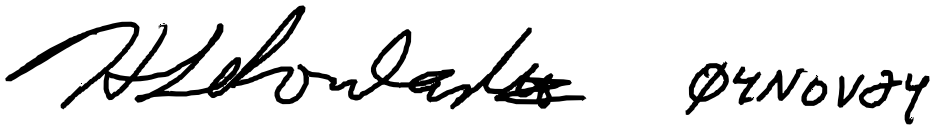
The current system also fosters division and dysfunction. Plurality elections discourage participation, particularly among younger and diverse candidates, who are often labeled "spoilers" if they run without major-party backing. Veterans, who are often among the most trusted groups in the country, understand how frustrating it is to see a system that doesn't prioritize broad support and stability. We know the importance of a united front and a consistent mission, values RCV helps promote by allowing leaders to build coalitions across a wider range of constituents. This is even more important in Connecticut where the largest group of registered voters are unaffiliated, and more and more veterans, close to 50%, are not affiliated with either party.

I believe that RCV can help bridge the civil-military divide as well. Veterans have become increasingly disillusioned by a political system that seems to serve agendas rather than people. We are the ones who live with the physical, emotional, and moral costs of decisions made by civilian leaders who may not always prioritize national security or public interest. When leaders are chosen by a narrow base, policies tend to shift wildly, further alienating both the military and

public. RCV offers a more democratic way to elect our officials, one that better reflects the preferences of all voters, ensuring the kind of stable, accountable governance our military and our country deserve.

In short, RCV is a reform that honors the sacrifices veterans have made to protect this country and empowers every voter, regardless of where or when they vote, to have a meaningful voice in our democracy. I urge this Working Group to recommend legislation that enables Ranked Choice Voting for Connecticut's presidential preference primaries, party primaries, and as a municipal option. This targeted adoption of RCV is a practical way to start reaping the benefits of this system to ensure that our government truly represents the people it serves.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Henry Rowland", followed by the date "04NOV24" written in a similar cursive style.

Henry Rowland  
Connecticut Task Force Leader, Veterans for All Voters

(203) 510-3544