

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

I am Laura Del Savio, a resident of Redding, an unaffiliated voter, and a member of the Board of the CT League of Conservation Voters.

I have spent five years reviewing research and creating content surrounding Ranked Choice Voting. **I am hopeful that this Committee will take Connecticut forward and finally provide the framework and the freedom for our elections to offer RCV to the voters in this state.**

You know the arguments in favor of RCV.

- **RCV increases the chance that a ballot will contribute to the election of a unifying candidate with broad support.** By allowing voters to rank candidates, there is a greater likelihood that their input contributes to the election of a representative. Simply put, more voters can feel like winners.
- **RCV fosters a more positive political climate.** Candidates may lose if they alienate their opponent's supporters, leading to less negative campaigning and encouraging candidates to build a broad coalition of support. In a Ranked Choice Voting competition, more *candidates* can feel like winners and we reinforce the pride that comes with running for office.
- **RCV amplifies voters' voices** by offering the opportunity to express their opinion of more than one candidate. Each voter still gets just one vote, but that single vote has more power when ranking candidates.
- **RCV supports majority rule** by ensuring that only candidates with the support of the majority of voters win. Candidates opposed by a majority of voters cannot.
- **RCV allows voters to vote for the candidate they like the best without worrying that voting for the candidate they like most will help elect a candidate they most strongly oppose.** This improves viability of more candidates and encourages people to run for office. Nobody wants to run when their loss is guaranteed from the outset.
- **RCV encourages more, and more diverse, candidates** to better reflect the full scope of political ideologies and the needs of different communities.

I would also like to offer an additional perspective. As a former teacher, I can speak to a shift in how we educate students and how expectations have evolved in response to emerging trends in technology and the workforce. A good modern education builds critical thinking skills. It wasn't always like that. Over the course of my three decades in the classroom, education evolved from more rote learning to inspiring creative thinking, and, within the past two decades, emphasizing critical thinking. There is good reason for this. A 2020 report by the World Economic Forum confirmed that “analytical thinking, creativity, and flexibility”¹ were the most sought-after skills by 2025. In 2023, a Forbes article proposed that “employees who lack basic critical thinking skills may be prone to making decisions based on assumptions, biases, or incomplete information.” Furthermore, it said, “Critical thinking skills enable employees to articulate their ideas, share their opinions, and offer constructive feedback, leading to improved collaboration and team productivity.”² McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm that helps organizations improve their performance, projects that the demand for skills such as critical thinking and decision-making will grow by 19% in the U.S. and by 14% in Europe through 2030.³

The world has changed. Our education has changed. And, as “routine mental tasks that historically made

¹ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2020/12/WEF-future-of-jobs-report-2020-zahidi>

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brycehoffman/2023/02/22/why-your-business-needs-critical-thinking/?sh=16cf47f036f6>

³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/skill-shift-automation-and-the-future-of-the-workforce>

up the bulk of people's workloads are increasingly automated, critical thinking is key for anyone who wants to continue adding value beyond what can be handled by machine learning."⁴ Critical thinking is a necessary feature of a productive, adaptable, and engaged society. Yet our election system ignores our changing culture and keeps our political system stuck in the past. Applying such values to our political practices keeps *learning* alive well beyond the classroom and supports critical needs of the workforce.

RCV reflects this cultural shift. Inspiring voters to become more informed reduces vulnerability to **deceptive, but simple, talking points, biases, and disinformation**. RCV may be the best weapon against such vulnerability which has emerged as a leading threat to our elections.

Teachers know. When you activate critical thinking, students are more engaged and excited. If elections give voters a reason to be excited, we can inspire voter participation and future leaders. Those serving on this committee know that deciding to run for office can be scary. You also know that serving your communities comes with a great reward. RCV elections are less punishing and more rewarding. With RCV, even if a candidate loses, earning a second or third place among the rankings validates their efforts.

Embracing electoral reform requires a willingness to buck a comfortable status quo. But our current elections are so comfortable that election day is more an assembly line of voters shepherded to the polls through *Get Out The Vote* campaigns. Voters arrive at the polls ready to obey the yard signs that tell them, simply, "Vote Row ___."

I urge you to consider the option. **Ranked Choice Voting promotes the core principles of representative democracy: representation, accountability, and voter impact.**

RCV is not complicated. It's not confusing. It's just different. As with any reform, education is a necessary feature of implementation. There will be an adjustment period as voters learn about RCV and adapt to the lack of "Vote Row A" yard signs. But this is exciting. Teenagers across our state are called upon to apply critical thinking to their lessons, so why cling to a form of elections that feeds on rote voting, leaving voters vulnerable to bias and disinformation?

This impacts you, as well. It is nearly impossible to convince voters outside your party's base to listen to your ideas, with the exception of a few legislators who are hailed as bipartisan champions. RCV will help you reach more voters because it is a system that invites voters to open their ears and minds to more candidates.

Let's reactivate critical thinking and open minds with Ranked Choice Voting. Plurality elections have rendered intelligent and independent thinking by voters useless. Voter apathy and disengagement are natural byproducts. If you worry that voters aren't well enough informed to appreciate Ranked Choice Voting, remember that our current system is the reason voters don't make more of an effort. Our teachers are doing their job, readying their students to make informed decision. Now, we must do the same and reinforce that learning long after formal education has ended. Access to information is not a problem. Motivation is. RCV provides that motivation. I contend that to strengthen democracy, we need to move away from automating voter input and offer an improved environment that encourages full participation by our citizens as both voters and candidates.

Ranked Choice Voting helps elections foster an environment where when you participate, you can make a difference.

Thank you for your time.

Laura Del Savio

⁴ <https://openlearning.mit.edu/news/can-critical-thinking-keep-your-company-competitive>