

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

Our current election system has deep structural flaws that are contributing to widespread disillusionment and polarization across the country. At RepresentUs, we believe that real solutions come from nonpartisan, structural reforms, which is why we support the adoption of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as a proven, effective step toward running better elections. RCV represents a simple adjustment to the way we vote, but one that will allow us to address several of our most entrenched political challenges. We urge this Working Group to recommend RCV for presidential primaries, party primaries, and as a municipal option for Connecticut.

Many Americans feel their voices are constrained by plurality-winner elections that seldom represent a true majority. When elections are decided by the narrowest of pluralities, leaders often govern with a limited mandate, leaving a large portion of their constituents feeling unrepresented. During your June 19th meeting, the Working Group explored the pitfalls of plurality voting, including how it frequently results in leaders who lack broad public support. For example, *FairVote's 2022 Primary Report* found that 120 candidates won primaries with less than majority support. This outcome weakens our democracy at every level.

Ranked Choice Voting changes this dynamic by ensuring that successful candidates are supported by the majority of their voters. By ranking preferences, voters are able to make their choices without the fear of "wasting" their vote or inadvertently helping candidates they don't support. As you discussed in your August 29th meeting, RCV eliminates the "spoiler effect" by allowing voters to rank candidates, making it easier for voters to consider all of their options and vote their conscience without fear of inadvertently helping the candidate they like the least. With RCV, we create a system that encourages a broader range of voices, allowing new ideas and perspectives to emerge and flourish in our democratic process.

One of the clearest benefits of RCV is its ability to address political polarization. Under the current "first-past-the-post" system, candidates are incentivized to appeal to their most loyal base, often by alienating others. The September 25th meeting highlighted the potential of RCV to encourage candidates to engage with a wider spectrum of voters. In an RCV system, candidates have a strong incentive to reach beyond their core supporters, since winning requires candidates to reach outside of their base and sometimes ask to be the second and third choice of their opponents' supporters. This approach promotes coalition-building and reduces the divisive rhetoric that has become so prevalent in American politics. This is one of the many reasons RepresentUs backs this reform.

Another issue with our current system is its effect on underrepresented groups. Ranked Choice Voting has the power to increase political representation for communities of color and women. The *2023 Ranked Choice Voting Memo* by RepresentWomen highlights that RCV encourages more inclusive, issue-focused campaigning, allowing candidates from diverse backgrounds to gain traction without fear of vote-splitting or marginalization. During the Working Group's October 4th meeting, members discussed the ways in which RCV can elevate new voices in our elections by reducing the impact of vote dilution in races with multiple candidates. This reform is

a necessary step toward a system where leaders better reflect the full diversity of their communities.

RCV also offers significant cost and efficiency benefits for Connecticut. Many municipalities, such as San Francisco and Oakland, have already adopted RCV and found it to be an efficient way to avoid costly runoff elections. As detailed in *Instant Runoffs: A Cheaper, Fairer, Better Way to Conduct Elections* (FairVote, 2023), RCV provides a single, decisive election outcome, saving taxpayer money and ensuring higher turnout than separate runoff elections. This was reiterated in the Working Group's September 25th meeting, where members discussed how RCV can deliver fiscal savings while preserving the quality and inclusiveness of our electoral process.

Our mission at RepresentUs is to foster a government that is accountable to the people and free from the influence of corrupt special interests. Ranked Choice Voting is a crucial reform that puts voters first, allowing them to express their true preferences and elect leaders who reflect the majority's will. This reform empowers Connecticut's electorate by giving voters more choices and encouraging candidates to appeal to a wider base to succeed. The broad coalition-building encouraged under RCV represents the ideal of "country over party"—a fundamental part of our mission.

In closing, we respectfully urge this Working Group to take action on Ranked Choice Voting. By recommending RCV for Connecticut's primaries and as a municipal option, you will be advancing a powerful solution that addresses the divisive, unrepresentative, and ineffective nature of our current system. Our democracy is built on the principle of majority rule, and RCV is the best way to ensure that majority-backed candidates lead us forward. We thank you for considering this essential reform.

Sincerely,
RepresentUs

References:

- FairVote. (2022). *Fewest Votes Wins: Plurality Victories In 2022 Primaries*.
- FairVote. (2023). *Instant Runoffs: A Cheaper, Fairer, Better Way to Conduct Elections*.
- RepresentWomen. (2023). *Ranked Choice Voting Memo: Expanding Representation for Communities of Color and Women*.