

Ronald M. Petronella
President



Brian P. Truini
Secretary-Treasurer

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on a proposal that has real potential to empower working people and make our elections fairer and more representative. As President of UFCW Local 371, I represent thousands of hardworking men and women across Connecticut, Western Massachusetts, and Vermont who are in retail, food processing, health care, and many other essential industries. We are part of a national organization committed to fighting for workers' rights, a fair wage, and decent working conditions. For us, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a reform that could improve the voice and choice of the very people we represent.

Our union has long supported policies that expand worker rights and strengthen democracy. I believe that RCV, by ensuring majority support and allowing voters to rank their true preferences, speaks directly to the values we fight for every day. With RCV, working people would be able to rank their choices without fear of wasting their votes, supporting the candidates who truly speak to their interests. This system would let our members vote for the candidates they genuinely believe in, without the pressure of strategic voting—a shift that's been long overdue.

One major issue raised during the meetings of this working group was how RCV can help address vote-splitting, a problem that too often leads to candidates winning with just a small slice of the vote. For workers, this has meant seeing leaders elected who don't have the broad-based support needed to fully represent their communities. This working group discussed examples of RCV in other places, like New York City, where the system helped bring forth candidates with the strongest overall support, not just the biggest slice of a divided vote. That is exactly the kind of representation we need—one that speaks for the majority of people and communities. In a union, we don't elect leaders unless they have majority support, and I think our political elections should reflect that same principle.

RCV could also benefit the political climate. A system that encourages candidates to seek second and third-choice support makes it necessary for them to reach out beyond their core supporters. For our members, who come from all backgrounds and hold diverse views, this means a political climate focused on collaboration and common ground, rather than division and conflict. As raised in multiple discussions by this working group, RCV incentivizes positive campaigning and collaboration, which is something we sorely need. Working families are tired of leaders who focus on tearing each other down rather than building each other up. It's time to give voters, especially those from the working class, more power to choose leaders who are willing to work together to find real solutions to the issues we face.

In my experience advocating for working families, I know firsthand that when voters feel they have real choices, their participation increases. The working group discussed how RCV can empower underrepresented communities, giving them a stronger voice in the political process.

This is especially relevant for union members, who, despite their critical role in our economy, have often felt sidelined in political discussions. The option to rank choices allows our members to vote for the candidates they really want to see in office without having to settle for the “lesser of two evils.” This empowerment can lead to a more engaged, motivated electorate, something our democracy desperately needs.

Let me also emphasize that this system wouldn't be a one-size-fits-all mandate. RCV allows for an optional approach for municipal elections, giving towns and cities the flexibility to adopt it if they see fit. Local leaders know their communities best, and this option respects that. Just as we respect the diversity of views among our members, we recognize that communities should have the choice to adopt a system that will best meet their needs.

Implementing RCV for presidential preference primaries, party primaries, and as an option for municipal elections could bring Connecticut closer to a democracy that truly reflects the will of its people. As a union leader, I support policies that make our system more inclusive, representative, and fair for all workers, not just a select few. RCV offers a path forward that values each vote and gives working people the opportunity to have their voices heard in a more meaningful way.

Thank you for considering this important step towards a stronger, fairer democracy. I strongly urge this working group to recommend Ranked Choice Voting as an option for Connecticut, because fair elections are essential to ensuring that working families are represented by leaders who truly support them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald M. Petronella". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ronald M. Petronella
President, UFCW Local 371