

In favor of Ranked Choice Voting in Connecticut Elections

Nov 7, 2024

Susan K. Alksnis

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

My name is Susan Alksnis, I vote in New Haven. And I cast my ballots using an overseas ballot, within my guaranteed right as a citizen to vote in federal elections.

I am a supporter of VoterChoice Connecticut.

I am also an elected member of the Democratic National Committee, representing Democrats Abroad, which is recognized by the Democratic National Committee as one of the 57 Democratic State Parties, similar to the Connecticut Democratic Party.

I am testifying in favor of implementing ranked choice voting in Connecticut for state, local and federal elections.

Election reform is important to me because we need to strengthen democracy now, giving people more faith that their votes matter. Ranked Choice Voting is a proven mechanism to help ensure candidates win with majority support.

Ranked Choice Voting will strengthen our democracy, reduce the spoiler effect, more accurately represent the wishes of the people, avoid having candidates win with a majority of voters preferring other candidates, allow voters to express their true preferences without worrying about "throwing their vote away" on a candidate with little chance of winning and which may help elect the candidate they like least, and other benefits identified.

I focus my remarks on how ranked choice voting can reduce administrative burdens on Local Election Officials and better enfranchise overseas voters.

Every federal election, thousands of Connecticut voters cast their votes by overseas ballot. Any of the 339 different local election officers across the state may have to receive overseas registration and ballot requests from these voters, verify their status, send a ballot, and then receive and verify a ballot, often sent by email but always with an added burden required by Connecticut and a handful of other states – voters must send paper ballots with ample time to arrive before the deadline. For overseas voters living in locations with unreliable postal systems or limited access to package delivery services, this can mean sending in their ballots significantly earlier than election day.

When there is an election with more than one candidate, often the case in primaries, which if held in a solid blue or red area can effectively decide the general election results, early voters, including overseas voters, may have their votes wasted if their chosen candidate drops out before election day.

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If there is a need for a run off election, these thousands of overseas voters, and many of the 339 local election officials across the state will have to repeat the multi step process of submitting ballot requests, confirming ballot requests, sending out ballots, making arrangements to return ballots by mail, and confirming and counting ballots.

With Ranked Choice Voting, there wouldn't be run-off elections, saving local election officials and overseas voters from repeating these steps, replaced by a single, simple, easy to understand ballot which will lead to election results that better reflect the majority of voters and strengthen democracy.

We must implement Ranked Choice Voting to strengthen our democracy, and encourage increased voting rates. FairVote surveys reveal that voters like RCV and find it simple to use. In Alaska's first RCV vote, 85% of voters called it 'simple' to use. After New York City's first RCV election, 77% of voters wanted to keep using it. And in Utah in 2021, 86% of voters were satisfied with the RCV experience.

Supported by leading Republicans (including Sen. John McCain), as well as Democrats (Barack Obama, Elizabeth Warren), Ranked Choice Voting doesn't favor one party over the other. Instead it favors voters – giving us more choice and ensuring the winner represents our wishes.

I'm heartened that over the past few years Connecticut has made voting easier. It's time for Connecticut to move forward with Ranked Choice Voting as a must-have election reform. Both Maine and Alaska have successfully implemented RCV, along with many cities across the country. So too can Connecticut.

I encourage you to propose legislation to implement Ranked Choice Voting for party primaries and municipal elections. I also encourage you to pursue legislation that would allow the use of RCV for all elections, including federal offices.

Sincerely,

Susan Kelly Alksnis

New Haven, CT voter currently residing overseas