



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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. As a philanthropic venture fund committed to nonpartisan election reform, Unite America's mission is to foster a more representative and functional government by investing in structural changes that put voters first. We believe that implementing Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) can have a profound effect on our democracy and the way we vote. We urge this Working Group to recommend an RCV option to the Governor and the Government Administration & Elections Committee for the 2025 legislative session.

Our democracy faces serious structural challenges; from polarization to disenfranchisement and dysfunctional governance, the flaws of our current plurality voting system are increasingly apparent. Traditional party primaries and plurality voting leave many voters without real choices and incentivize division rather than problem-solving. As the Working Group discussed in its June 19th meeting, plurality voting can result in winners who lack majority support, leading to the election of candidates who most voters do not support. This issue, commonly known as the "spoiler effect," was highlighted in research conducted by FairVote, which found that in 2022, 120 candidates across the country won statewide and congressional primaries without majority support (FairVote, 2022). Further, in 2024, the Unite America Institute found that there were 44 open U.S. House seats in safe districts effectively decided in primaries, and 21 incoming representatives won their primaries with less than majority support. These statistics underscore the need for reform to ensure that leaders are genuinely representative of the people.

Unite America has been actively involved in pioneering election reform, most notably as the largest investor in the effort to pass, implement, and defend Alaska's new election system: a top-four all-candidate primary followed by a general election with RCV. Upon its first use in 2022, Alaska's new system yielded more meaningful voter participation, fewer uncompetitive seats, better ideological and descriptive representation, and more collaborative governing. The use of RCV in the general election empowered Alaskans to vote freely for candidates they genuinely supported without fearing that their votes would be "wasted" or inadvertently benefit their least-preferred candidate.

In the Working Group's August 29th meeting, participants explored how RCV provides an incentive for candidates to reach beyond their base and build coalitions across diverse constituencies. This shift in incentive structure has already led to more positive, issue-based campaigns in cities like San Francisco and Oakland, as noted in the September 25th meeting of this Working Group.

Moreover, RCV acts as an instant runoff — a far more efficient alternative to traditional runoff elections. In *Instant Runoffs: A Cheaper, Fairer, Better Way to Conduct Elections* (FairVote, 2023), research shows that by eliminating the need for separate, low-turnout runoff elections, RCV reduces the financial burden on taxpayers while still ensuring that elected officials have majority support. As the Working Group discussed in its September 25th meeting, cities using RCV have experienced significant savings, reducing expenses associated with runoff elections while simultaneously increasing voter engagement in a single, decisive election.

Adopting RCV in Connecticut would prevent wasted votes, allow voters to support their preferred candidate instead of “the lesser of two evils,” and foster competition among a more diverse slate of candidates, including independents and third parties. As noted in the report *The Civic Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting* (CLC, 2018), RCV increases voter satisfaction and participation by giving individuals more meaningful choices. The Working Group’s August 7th meeting also underscored how RCV offers voters the ability to express their preferences fully by allowing them to rank the candidates and not forcing voters to make a strategic decision about which single candidate to support.

The data is clear. RCV helps to reduce polarization, encourages candidates to campaign on finding common ground and broadly popular issues, and ensures that winning candidates have the support of the majority of voters. In a 2023 report, *Ranked Choice Voting Benefits Candidates and Voters of Color*, FairVote highlights that RCV broadens candidate diversity and mitigates the structural disadvantages posed by vote-splitting, particularly for communities of color (FairVote, 2023).

In conclusion, we believe that Ranked Choice Voting is a critical reform for creating a more representative and functional government. By providing voters with greater choice, ensuring winners have majority support, and encouraging coalition-building, RCV addresses the problems with plurality voting. We strongly urge this Working Group to recommend legislation to allow the use of RCV in municipalities and beyond.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Unite America

References:

- CLC. (2018). *The Civic Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting: Eight Ways Adopting Ranked Choice Voting Can Improve Voting and Elections*.
- FairVote. (2022). *Fewest Votes Wins: Plurality Victories In 2022 Primaries*.
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- Unite American Institute. (2024). *New Analysis: The 2024 Primary Problem*.