

Governor Lamont's Working Group on Ranked Choice Voting

Working Group Recommendations:

The Working Group recommends that the legislature consider and adopt legislation to:

(a) give municipalities the option (but not a mandate) to decide to use RCV in certain municipal elections,

(b) give the political parties the option (but not a mandate) to use RCV in party conventions and primaries,

(c) give the political parties the option (but not a mandate) to use (or not use) RCV tabulation processes in their presidential preference primaries for purposes of determining how to allocate delegates to their national conventions;

(d) utilize the use of a ranked-choice form of ballot in presidential preference primaries in order to minimize the increased risk of early and absentee voters, including military ballots, losing their votes in such primaries when they vote for a candidate who drops out of the race after their ballot is cast and before Election Day, while otherwise expressly preserving the authority of the parties to decide whether and how to use (or not use) ranked choice voting tabulation processes for allocating delegates; and

(e) provide the Secretary of State the ability to defer implementation of RCV if she determines that there are issues with ballot design or the tabulation technology, or inadequate resources.

In making these recommendations, the Working Group does not intend to impact fusion voting or the Clean Election Program.

It also stresses the importance of robust civic education, generally, and particularly with the roll out of RCV, and that the Legislature provide the Secretary of State's office with adequate resources to properly implement RCV for the limited purposes provided in these recommendations.

Finally, the Working Group recommends that a pilot program for municipalities interested in RCV be established to allow for hands on evaluation of RCV, to allow those municipalities and its residents who want to use RCV to do so in certain races, and to provide the Secretary of State with the ability and resources to test out RCV on a limited basis.

Any proposed legislation from the Governor should include a financial commitment to fully fund the creation and implementation of RCV.

Executive Summary:

In response to growing interest and advocacy for electoral reform, Governor Ned Lamont established a Working Group on Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) during the 2024 legislative session to explore the feasibility and implementation of RCV in Connecticut. The potential reform aims to enhance democratic participation, reduce negative campaigning, eliminate wasted votes (with early voting including absentee and military ballots) and ensure that election outcomes reflect the preferences of a broader segment of the electorate.

Connecticut has recently advanced some significant voting reforms to protect voters, modernize the process, and increase participation; RCV is the next logical step. Where RCV has been adopted, it has increased the number of viable candidates, increased voter participation, reduced extremism, improved the character of campaigns, and ensured that the winning candidate had the support of a majority.

The Working Group comprises a diverse range of stakeholders, including legislators, electoral experts, advocacy groups, and community leaders. The Group's primary goals include examining best practices from other jurisdictions where RCV has been successfully implemented, evaluating the potential benefits and challenges specific to Connecticut, and providing recommendations on legislative and procedural changes necessary for adoption.

Key objectives of the Working Group include:

1. **Assessment of RCV:** Analyze the impact of RCV on voter engagement, election outcomes, and overall voter satisfaction. This involves studying existing data from states and municipalities that utilize RCV.

2. **Public Education and Engagement:** Understand the importance of educating the public and policymakers about the advantages of RCV and gather community input to understand voter preferences.

3. **Implementation Framework:** Create a plan for implementing a limited scope of RCV in Connecticut, including timelines, costs, and technological requirements.

4. **Legislative Recommendations:** Formulate proposed legislation that enables municipalities and parties to adopt RCV, ensuring it aligns with state regulations and promotes a smooth transition for both voters and election officials.

The Working Group has been committed to transparency and inclusiveness, engaging in discussions with the public and stakeholders throughout the process. The outcome is a set of recommendations that will be presented to Governor Lamont and the General Assembly, paving the way for enabling RCV legislation in Connecticut.

As the Group's formal work comes to an end, maintaining an open channel for feedback and continuous dialogue with constituents will be crucial to address concerns and foster support for the proposed changes. The success of RCV implementation hinges on legislative action and building consensus and trust among voters.