



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Support Senate Bill 493 – Elections – Ranked–Choice Voting – Contests for Presidential Nomination in 2028

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

March 1, 2024

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of this bill, which establishes a ranked choice voting system as a pilot for the 2028 Presidential party primaries in Maryland.

The City of Takoma Park is a densely developed, largely residential municipality of almost 18,000 people living within 2.4 square miles in Montgomery County. About half our residents are homeowners and half renters, with a wide range of incomes, backgrounds and ethnicities.

Takoma Park has implemented ranked choice voting (RCV) with great success in every municipal election since 2007. RCV was passed by the city council as an amendment to the City Charter in 2006 after an 83% vote of approval by voters in a 2005 advisory ballot question. Our residents have embraced this approach, which allows several rounds of counting ballots if on the first round no one candidate receives more than 50% of the vote for an office. Before each election, and as part of election outreach, the RCV system is explained so voters are prepared when they actually vote their ballot.

RCV allows for a fuller expression of voter preferences. Ranking additional candidates will never hurt a voter's first choice, but it may help that voter's second choice. It allows the winning candidate to feel confident they have the backing of a majority of the voters, an especially important consideration in a primary election. And at the municipal level, it saves the expense and delay of organizing a separate election to determine the ultimate winner.

While our local experience with ranked choice voting has been positive, this bill allows the State Board of Elections to in essence pilot this approach and survey voters afterward to gauge their satisfaction with the system.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports bill 493 and urges a favorable committee vote.