

**TESTIMONY OF THE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE OF THE
DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF LEISURE WORLD
ON FEBRUARY 6, 2024
BEFORE THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
ON HB 423
MONTGOMERY COUNTY – VOTING METHODS
MC-24
SUPPORT**

Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

I am long time resident of Montgomery County in District 15 and now living in Leisure World in District 19. I am testifying in favor of HB 423, Montgomery County - Voting Methods, on behalf of the Legislative Advocacy Committee of the Democratic Club of Leisure World. Leisure World is a community of over 8000 seniors in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Rank voting is not a new concept. it has been used for state primary, congressional, and presidential elections.¹ As of November 2023, two states, three counties and 45 cities used rank voting. ² Cities like New York, Seattle, Minneapolis, New York, Santa Fe and Salt Lake. Here in Maryland, Takoma Park uses it.³

As a supporter of the two party system, I believe it is important that the winning candidate reflect the majority of the voters. The will of the voters should govern.

Unfortunately, experience in Montgomery County has demonstrated that a winner might have less than the majority support. For example, in Montgomery County, the County Executive in 2022 received less than 40% of the primary vote and in 2018 received less than 30% of the primary vote. Given the politics of Montgomery, the winners of the democratic primary usually win the general elections.

Rank voting prevents the election of a candidate whom the majority of the voters do not support even though the candidate received a plurality of the votes.

The key benefit of rank voting is that the result better reflects the views of the voters. In addition, rank voting has two important benefits that helps our community:

- 1) It allows the voter to vote for his/her favorite candidate as well as to vote for secondary choices if the preferred candidate does not get enough votes.
- 2) It encourages positive campaigns as it requires the candidate to seek support not only from his/her base supporters but also to voters who may see the candidate as a second

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranked-choice_voting_in_the_United_States

² <https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting-information/#where-is-ranked-choice-voting-used>

³ <https://takomaparkmd.gov/ranked-choice-voting-how-to-mark-a-ballot/>

or third choice. This should result in campaigns seeking the support of broad coalitions rather than ones resulting in dividing factions of voters. It thus encourages civility in campaigns.

Importantly, this bill does not mandate rank voting. Rather it gives a choice to Montgomery County as it should. The County is required to adopt legislation to implement this bill that will provide an opportunity for County residents to provide input to their elected representatives.

This is a limited bill. It will not affect any jurisdiction other than Montgomery County. From a fiscal perspective, it should not have a material effect on general fund expenditures.

Given the bill's limitation to just Montgomery County and minimum financial impact, the Committee should defer to the County's delegation recommendation on the bill and pass this bill.

Respectively submitted,

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