

**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**HB 767 – Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 22-21**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Kathy McGuire and Diane Hibino – Co-Presidents**

**Date: February 16, 2021**

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) supports HB 767 that authorizes the Montgomery County Council to adopt a law to allow ranked choice voting to be used for elections for local offices in Montgomery County.

The League was founded on the belief that voters should play a critical role in democracy. Ranked choice voting (RCV) maximizes that ability by ensuring that winning candidates have support from a majority of voters.

RCV empowers voters because it allows them to vote for their true first-choice candidate without feeling like they might be “wasting” their vote.

RCV empowers elected officials because they will have a stronger mandate and more accountability when they know they are supported by a majority (at least 50%) of voters.

RCV encourages more civilized, less negative campaigns because candidates will need to appeal to their opponents’ supporters for their second-choice votes.

RCV would have been very useful to Montgomery County voters in 2018 as they tried to determine which four of 33 Democratic candidates for County Council at large to vote for in the Primary Election. The four winning candidates who also went on to win in the General Election received 12.2 percent, 9.6 percent, 8.0 percent, and 7.4 percent of the vote – hardly a mandate from the voters.

Since we can expect a large number of candidates for County Council in 2022 both due to term limits and going from five Council districts to seven, all parties would be better served by ranked choice voting rather than the current plurality or first past the post voting method.

The LWVMC strongly urges a favorable report on HB 767.