

Testimony

Ways and Means Committee

February 7, 2023 1:00 p.m. hearing

Montgomery County-Ranked Choice Voting and the Inclusion of the City of Takoma Park Municipal Elections on the State Ballot

Name: Laurie Halverson (8812 Harness Trail, Potomac MD 20854), District 15
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Position: Strongly Oppose

Montgomery County Federation of Republican Women (which includes four clubs representing 400 women) strongly oppose HB0334 for these reasons:

- 1. Takoma Park's choice for Ranked Choice Voting should not be transferred to the pockets of Marylanders.** Takoma Park is an outlier to the election process in Maryland. A 2018 MIT study concluded that jurisdictions that use RCV were found to spend significantly more on elections overall. The cost was five standard deviations greater than would have otherwise been expected. Link to the study: <https://electionlab.mit.edu/articles/cost-ranked-choice-voting>. Why should Marylanders pay the cost of this expensive, costly and illogical method of voting? It makes no sense why Maryland residents should cover the costs for Takoma Park's overly excessive processes in their municipal elections. In addition, the fiscal notes say that there is uncertainty to the cost in future years. The fiscal notes also say that the number of vendor options would be reduced, which would make it more likely that the overall cost of the vendor chosen could be greater.
- 2. Non-citizens who are allowed to vote in Takoma Park as well as 16 and 17 year old teen voters, would add to the cost to Maryland taxpayers.** Besides U.S. Citizens, Takoma Park allows non-citizens and teens who are 16 and 17 to vote. So, let Takoma Park pay for their damaging choices. The residents of Takoma Park are choosing to dilute the voices of U.S. citizens and that is what they want to do, but why should Marylanders share in the cost of this?
- 3. Tabulating votes could be tricky:** The 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution says citizens must be 18 years old to vote. Does it make sense to tabulate federal and state votes with Takoma Park's municipal ballots when these ballots include voters who are not eligible to vote in federal and state elections?
- 4. Timing of vote tabulation could take longer:** Remember how much longer it took to count the votes last November? When RCV votes are included in the vote tabulation process at the state level, it would surely add to the time it takes to tabulate the votes. Do you think this is something your constituents would welcome?

While this is a county bill, it does affect Marylanders financially and it could cause other municipalities in our state to follow Takoma Park's lead.