

## **SB0383 Elections - Ranked-Choice Voting in Contests for Presidential Nomination and Certification of Election-Supporting Technology**

### **Testimony of Reed Harrison, Darius Holt, and Dona Sauerburger on behalf of Independent Voters of Maryland in Support of SB0303.**

Independent Voters of Maryland is an organization of Maryland citizens who are Unaffiliated voters or independent-minded voters. We advocate for electoral reform that benefits all citizens, including fully open primaries.

Maryland needs electoral reform to improve the effectiveness of our state government and increase voter participation. Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) is a step in the right direction.

Why? RCV has several advantages over traditional voting methods in elections with multiple candidates. Here are the key benefits of RCV that we see:

#### **1.) Ensures Our Elected Representative have Majority Support**

- Instead of a candidate winning with a simple plurality when they have less than 50% of the vote, RCV ensures the winner has majority support. If no candidate gets a majority in the first round, votes are redistributed from the least popular candidates until someone surpasses 50%.
- In traditional plurality elections, similarly popular candidates can split the vote, allowing a less popular candidate to win.

#### **2.) Encourages Inherently More Effective Bi-partisan Elected Representatives and Less Divisive Campaigning**

- Candidates have an incentive to appeal to a broader audience, as they may need second- or third-choice votes from their opponents' supporters. This often leads to less negative campaigning and fewer hyper-partisan elected representatives.

#### **3.) Increases Voter Satisfaction and Participation**

- RCV allows voters to more fully express all their preferences. They rank multiple candidates in order of preference.
- Voters are more likely to participate when they feel their vote truly matters and they don't have to vote for only the "most electable" candidate or be forced to pick only the "lesser of evils."
- Traditional voting can lead people to vote against a disliked candidate rather than for their favorite. RCV allows voters to rank candidates, knowing their vote will count even if their top choice is eliminated.

#### **4.) Promotes More Diverse Representation**

- By reducing vote-splitting and giving a fairer shot to non-traditional candidates, RCV can increase the chances of electing women and minorities.

#### **5.) Reduces the Need for Costly Runoff Elections**

- Since RCV simulates a runoff in one election, jurisdictions save money by avoiding separate runoff elections, which often have lower turnout.

In summary, RCV fosters fairer, more representative elections by ensuring winners reflect majority support, reducing negative and divisive and counter-productive hyper-partisanship, and giving voters greater freedom of choice and the ability to more fully express all their views.