Written Testimony for **HB 215/SB 383**: Elections - Ranked-Choice Voting in Contests for Presidential Nomination and Certification of Election-Supporting Technology: Please **VOTE NO** on this legislation!!

Dear Ways & Means Committee Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and all other esteemed Committee Members:

Please vote to OPPOSE this bill!!

The wording in this bill defines Ranked-Choice Voting as: "...IN THIS SUBSECTION, "RANKED–CHOICE VOTING" MEANS A METHOD OF CASTING AND TABULATING VOTES IN WHICH VOTERS RANK CANDIDATES IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE…"

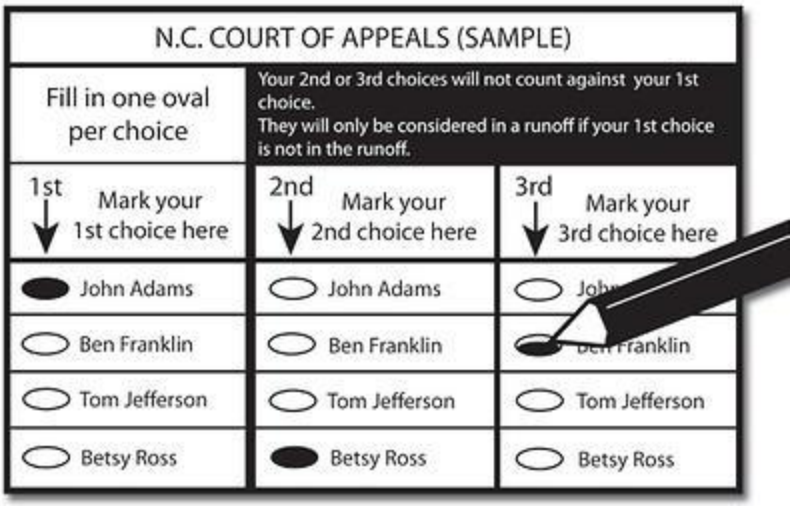
I am asking all of you to vote AGAINST this bill, because **there are major problems with Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV).** Here is some research into Ranked-Choice Voting:

"Approval voting and ranked choice voting are two of the most popular alternative voting methods in use today. While ranked choice voting has been around longer and is more well known, our research indicates that approval voting is a more effective voting method than ranked choice voting (RCV) based on many factors. Note that ranked choice voting is the same as instant-runoff voting (IRV). RCV sometimes limits voters to ranking only three candidates but not always. Limiting voters to ranking only three can be common because of RCV's complexity…"
https://electionscience.org/library/approval-voting-versus-irv/

Ballot Simplicity

Approval voting can be done with the same ballots voters are used to; you just remove the rule that says “vote for only one”:

RCV, on the other hand, requires a new ballot; because ranking all candidates would take up too much space, the ballots are typically limited to ranking three choices:



Calculation Simplicity

Approval voting requires only addition. The candidate with the most votes wins, and results from multi-candidate elections are easily shown in bar graph form.

RCV, however, uses a more complicated algorithm:
Total all the first-choice votes. If a candidate has greater than half these votes among the valid ballots, then elect that candidate. If not, then eliminate the candidate with the least first-choice votes. Look at the ballots from that eliminated candidate. Transfer that candidate' next-choice votes to those candidates and treat those votes as first-choice votes. Again, look to see if a candidate has greater than half these first-choice votes among the remaining valid ballots. If there is again no winner, then repeat this process until a

candidate has greater than half the total votes among the remaining valid ballots.

Ballot Spoilage

A spoiled ballot occurs when a voter votes for too many candidates or otherwise makes a mistake on their ballot that causes it to be invalidated. RCV results in about seven times as many spoiled ballots as plurality voting, on average. Approval voting, however, experimentally results in about one fifth as many spoiled ballots as plurality.

Voting Machine Cost

Whether you're doing a hand count or using a voting machine, approval voting works fine either way. You're just adding candidate selections and removing the rule saying you can only choose one candidate.

RCV, on the other hand, is much more daunting to calculate by hand. Further, voting machines require significant and costly software upgrades to run RCV elections. And most machines currently don't allow for this software upgrade. This means buying entirely new (and expensive) voting machines. This can quickly toll in the millions of dollars.

Precinct Summability & Delay

Approval voting lets you do tallies at multiple locations or precincts. Those separate tallies can then be aggregated to achieve a result.

RCV, however, cannot be counted in precincts or separate locations. It must be counted in a centralized area.
Requiring a central tally location can also cause delays in getting final results. For instance, this message appeared on the San Francisco city government website for several weeks after their 2008 RCV elections:
“Due to the requirement that all ballots must be centrally tallied in City Hall and not at the polling places, the Department of Elections has not set a date for releasing any preliminary results using the ranked choice voting method.”

Risk of Ties

Approval voting, like plurality, only has one layer of calculation. This creates only one opportunity for a tie. RCV, because it has multiple rounds (more with more candidates), creates many opportunities for ties. That said, the risk of a tie—with both approval and RCV—becomes less likely as the voter population is larger.

https://electionscience.org/library/approval-voting-versus-irv/

In “Ranked-Choice Voting: A Disaster in Disguise”, the key findings were as follows:

KEY FINDINGS

Ballots in ranked-choice voting elections are more complex than traditional "one-person, one vote" elections.
Exhausted ballots in ranked-choice voting races silence the voice of significant portions of the electorate.
Districts using ranked-choice voting have lower voter turnout rates.
Ranked-choice voting changes and delays the election counting process.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Lawmakers should ban ranked-choice voting at all levels of government.

When making an informed decision at the ballot box becomes an onerous process, corruption becomes inevitable.
Casting a vote in an RCV election is difficult. Instructions for RCV ballots are generally cumbersome, often confusing voters. Because the process of filling out the ballot is difficult to understand, error rates for RCV elections remain higher than those of traditional elections. This results in more citizens having their votes thrown away because of an overly complex system.

Exhausted ballots in elections with ranked-choice voting silence voters

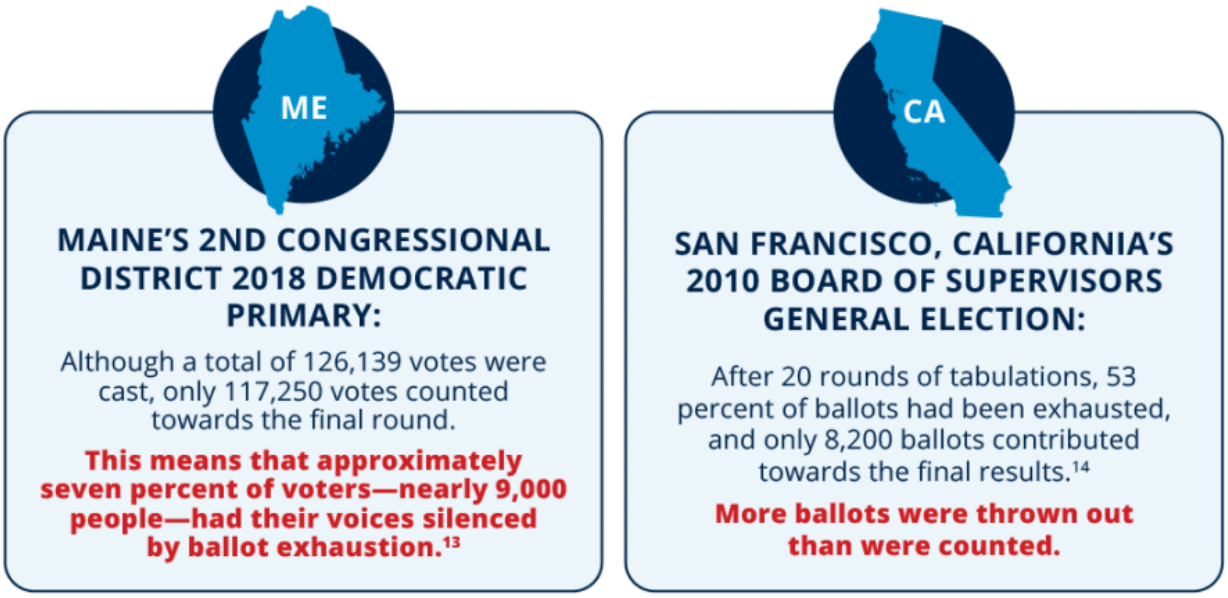
In traditional elections, every submitted ballot that follows the instructions is counted towards the result, but this isn't the case with RCV.

"Exhausted ballots" in RCV elections do not count towards the final tally. While many RCV ballots are thrown out due to voter error in following convoluted instructions, ballots that follow the instructions to the letter can also be thrown away because the voter ranked candidates who are no longer in contention. As candidates are eliminated through multiple rounds of tabulation, voters have their ballots exhausted if they only ranked candidates that have been removed during successive rounds.

In other words, for a voter's voice to fully count in every round of an RCV election, he must vote for all candidates on the ballot, even those he may not support.

Because of ballot exhaustion, winners of RCV races do not necessarily represent the choice of all voters who participated. RCV claims to protect majority rule, but in reality, **RCV creates an artificial majority** by eliminating the votes of the lowest-scoring candidates during successive tabulations. One study of Maine elections found that, of 98 recent RCV elections, 60 percent of RCV victors did not win by a majority of the total votes cast.

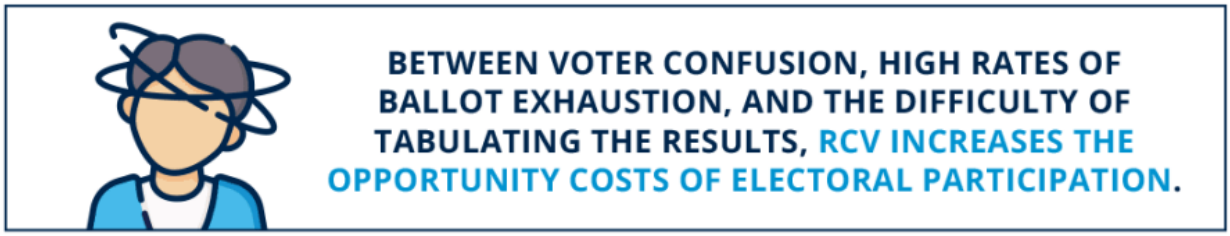
WITH RANKED-CHOICE VOTING, NOT ALL VOTES COUNT



Districts using ranked-choice voting have lower voter turnout rates

Implementing RCV lowers voter turnout rates. For example, both Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, have run local elections using RCV for more than a decade, and both "lag well behind other major metropolitan cities in municipal election voter turnout."[15-17] In fact, comparatively lower voter turnout in jurisdictions using RCV is a consistent pattern. A study of San Francisco elections from 1995 to 2011 revealed a strong relationship between a decline in voter turnout and the adoption of RCV.[18] Furthermore, during odd or off-cycle election years, RCV jurisdictions have on average eight percent lower voter turnout rates than non-RCV jurisdictions.[19]

Because RCV is more complex than traditional voting, the system inherently discourages new and infrequent voters from participating.[20] Between voter confusion, high rates of ballot exhaustion, and the difficulty of tabulating the results, RCV increases the opportunity costs of electoral participation.

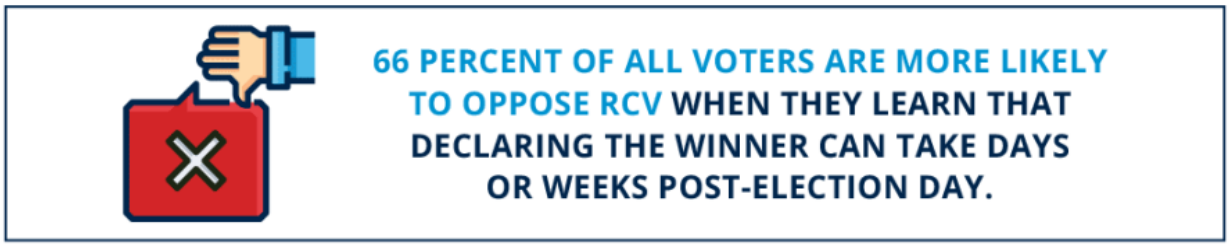


Ranked-choice voting changes and delays the election counting process

Perhaps the most concerning component of RCV elections is the required changes to the ballot counting process.

Similar to the primary election caucus process still used in certain jurisdictions, RCV ballots must be transported to a centralized location for counting due to multiple rounds of tabulation in the event of an instant runoff, potentially increasing the cost of the election and vulnerability to mismanagement.[21] When informed that RCV increases election irregularities, 71 percent of all voters, regardless of party affiliation, are more likely to oppose RCV.[22]

Because of the convoluted and centralized tabulation process, counting the final results in RCV elections is time consuming, and rarely are election results available on Election Day. In fact, 66 percent of all voters are more likely to oppose RCV when they learn that declaring the winner can take days or weeks post-Election Day.[23] Even minor delays in delivery of election results spark concerns of impropriety and significantly impact voter confidence—which our democracy cannot endure.



RANKED-CHOICE VOTING LEADS TO LENGTHY DELAYS IN ELECTION RESULTS

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA'S 2009 MAYORAL RACE:

The election office estimated that, for a turnout of 70,000 voters, tabulation would take 37 eight-hour shifts with 102 election officials working.

In other words, tabulation was estimated to take 30,192 man-hours or nearly 13 days of round-the-clock counting.[24]

NEW YORK CITY'S 2021 MAYORAL DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY:

NYC's primary took 15 days to reach a conclusion, with the two final candidates only separated by slightly more than one percent of the vote.[25]

A contributing factor to the delay was the erroneous inclusion of 135,000 test ballots.[26]

THE BOTTOM LINE: Lawmakers should ban ranked-choice voting at all levels of government.

Sadly, many Americans lack confidence in the election process.

The good news is that eliminating and restricting RCV has bipartisan support in state governments across the country. Just this year, both Florida and Tennessee passed sweeping legislation to ban RCV in all state and local races, which is the only way to stop municipalities from restructuring their electoral systems for the worse.[30-31]

Prominent Democrats also have a history of speaking out against RCV, including former California Governor Jerry Brown and current Governor Gavin Newsom.[32] Vetoing the California State Legislature's 2019 attempt to institute RCV for all state elections, Newsom expressed "concern that [RCV] has often led to voter confusion, and that the promise that [RCV] leads to greater democracy is not necessarily fulfilled."[33]

Strengthening the trust that the American people have in the election process should not be a partisan issue. Banning ranked-choice voting is a measure that everyone ought to support to protect election integrity

Ranked-Choice Voting: A Disaster in Disguise

Ranked-Choice Voting: A Disaster in Disguise

Ranked-choice voting needlessly complicates the voting system, leading to voter confusion, lower turnout, and sl...

I could list many more resources that show why Ranked-Choice Voting is a bad idea. I'm sure none of you have the time for that, so I won't waste your time. By even glancing through the above information, you can see my point as to why I am asking that all of you OPPOSE this bill.

Ranked-Choice Voting sounds way better than it actually is and will cost a lot of money to implement. It doesn't even necessarily "elect" the candidate that wins the

most votes by ALL voters, because many ballots are thrown out!! Therefore, Maryland cannot afford the actual cost of Ranked-Choice Voting!!

Thank you for your courtesy and cooperation in voting AGAINST this disastrous bill!!

Trudy Tibbals
A Very Concerned Mother and Maryland resident