

In favor of HB 1094

My name is Edward Durland, and I am representing myself and the Green Party of Montgomery County.

In countries that have two-party systems, both official, such as the US, or multi-party where two parties entirely dominate such as South Korea, political divisions become intensified across the board over time.

Instead of requiring cooperation between parties and, therefore, the people within parties, leading to a more united country, the option of voting for one of only two parties leads to the voter thinking of the opposition party as the big “other.” While ranked-choice voting does not magically fix a political divide, it does allow voters to prioritize their opinions in a way that leads to a more open discussion and nuance in politics.

Ranked-choice voting does not necessarily threaten center-right and center-left parties, i.e., the Republicans and the Democrats. This is shown by the fact that most of our traditionally allied countries have a multi-party system yet remain dominated by two large parties. This includes Germany, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

The point of having political parties is to group ideologies into manageable organizations. A political system where everyone is independent with unique views slows the political process down dramatically. Instead, people are grouped into parties for simplicity and ease of policy.

Now, how many of these groups can or should exist? There is no correct answer except that the people themselves should be allowed to vote without the fear of their vote being “useless.” Ranked-choice enables voters to prioritize which policy platforms they prefer. Thus, the number of votes for each party or candidate directly relates to what the people want.

Looking at the German Bundestag (their parliament), I see a system of openness to political parties. Within the parliament, the two main parties are the traditional center-left and center-right parties, accompanied by smaller leftist, green, economic liberal, and right-wing parties. These four smaller parties together have about the same electoral amounts as the two main parties combined, thereby including an additional half of the electorate that is currently excluded under the American two-party dominance.

As a high school student, I see dissatisfaction among my peers with both Democrat and Republican parties. Providing just a few more options would allow people to vote for policies that more closely represent them. This will keep my generation in America’s democratic process.

Also, competition leads to innovation, and the two-party system’s current monopoly has stifled the policy response to today’s major challenges, such as climate change, the housing crisis, and worsening socioeconomic cleavages.

To fix this, allow other parties to actually compete through ranked-choice voting (with closed primaries). In one of the oldest systems of democracy and capitalism, allow HB 1094 to pass as an advance for democracy and innovative policy solutions that myself and my generation want.