

**TESTIMONY OF THE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE OF THE
DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF LEISURE WORLD
ON FEBRUARY 24,2025
BEFORE THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
HB 1094 MONTGOMERY COUNTY – VOTING METHODS MC-9-25**

Favorable with Amendment

Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

I am long time resident of Montgomery County. I am testifying in favor of HB 1094, Montgomery County - Voting Methods, on behalf of the Legislative Advocacy Committee of the Democratic Club of Leisure World. Leisure World is a community of over 8000 seniors in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Rank choice voting is not a new concept. it has been used for state primary, congressional, and presidential elections. As of November 2024, two states, three counties and 46 cities used rank choice voting.¹ Cities like New York, Seattle, Minneapolis, New York, Santa Fe and Salt Lake. Here in Maryland, Takoma Park uses it.² In total 62 jurisdictions across 24 states use rank choice voting.³

As a supporter of the two-party system, we believe it is important that the winning candidate reflect the majority of the voters. The will of the voters should govern.

Unfortunately, experience in Montgomery County has demonstrated that a winner might have less than the majority support. For example, in Montgomery County, the County Executive in 2022 received less than 40% of the primary vote and in 2018 received less than 30% of the primary vote. Given the politics of Montgomery, the winners of the democratic primary usually win the general elections.

Rank choice voting prevents the election of a candidate whom the majority of the voters do not support even though the candidate received a plurality of the votes.

The key benefit of rank choice voting is that the result better reflects the views of the voters. In addition, rank choice voting has two important benefits that helps our community:

- 1) It allows the voter to vote for his/her favorite candidate as well as to vote for secondary choices if the preferred candidate does not get enough votes.
- 2) It encourages positive campaigns as it requires the candidate to seek support not only from his/her base supporters but also to voters who may see the candidate as a second

¹ <https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting-information/>

² <https://takomaparkmd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4990/2024-Takoma-Park-Election-Certified-Results?bidId=>

³ Id. note 1.

or third choice. This should result in campaigns seeking the support of broad coalitions rather than ones resulting in dividing factions of voters. It thus encourages civility in campaigns.

Importantly, this bill does not mandate rank choice voting. Rather it gives a choice to Montgomery County as it should. The County is required to adopt legislation to implement this bill that will provide an opportunity for County residents to provide input to their elected representatives.

While we support the County's legislative process, given the electorate lack of familiarity with rank choice voting, we respectfully recommend an amendment that would require a referendum to be held in the County demonstrating a majority of voters support the legislation before it can be implemented.

Specifically, we recommend that the bill be amended to add:

8-101(c)(5) A local law enacted under subsection (c)(2) above may not take effect until the County holds a referendum where the majority of voters supports the local law enacted in subsection (c)(2).

Respectively submitted,

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