

SB800.pdf

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Position: FAV



2/9/2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Center for Election Science respectfully submits this letter in support of Senate Bill 800. The Center for Election Science is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving democratic outcomes through research and education on voting methods, including approval voting and other evidence-based reforms. Our mission is to ensure that election systems empower voters to express their preferences accurately and that election outcomes reflect broad voter support.

SB 800 represents a prudent and forward-looking approach to election policy. Rather than mandating immediate implementation of any alternative voting method, the bill establishes a structured task force to evaluate approval voting and ranked-choice voting through research, comparative analysis, and stakeholder engagement.




At a time when several states have chosen to outright prohibit or preempt consideration of alternative voting methods, Maryland is taking a more measured approach. By authorizing a task force to study these systems, Maryland affirms that election policy should be guided by data, real-world experience, administrative feasibility, and voter impact.

Maryland has seen multiple legislative proposals related to both approval voting and ranked-choice voting in recent years. HB 1289 provides an opportunity to consolidate those discussions into a comprehensive review process.

The Center for Election Science supports careful, evidence-based study of voting innovations. Approval voting, in particular, has been adopted in municipal elections in jurisdictions such as Fargo, North Dakota and St. Louis, Missouri, demonstrating that alternative methods can be implemented successfully at scale. However, any reform should be considered thoughtfully and transparently.

SB 800 does not predetermine an outcome. It simply ensures that Maryland policymakers and voters have access to rigorous analysis before making long-term structural changes to the state's election system. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 1289.

Sincerely,
Nina Taylor, MA
Chief Executive Officer
Center for Election Science

electionscience.org 
comms@electionscience.org 
440 N Barranca Ave Suite 2468 Covina, CA 91723 

SB 800 - Written Testimony - EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

MIKE MCKAY
Legislative District 1
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties



Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

Joint Committees
Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review
Children, Youth, and Families
Program Open Space and Agricultural
Land Preservation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 416
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3565
800-492-7122 Ext. 3565
Mike.McKay@senate.maryland.gov

Cumberland Office
100N Mechanic Street
Cumberland, Maryland 21502
240-362-7040

Williamsport Office
2N Conococheque Street
Williamsport Town Hall
Williamsport, Maryland

Senate Bill 800 – Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting

February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 800, which establishes the Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting. This legislation represents a critical step toward modernizing Maryland’s electoral system by exploring innovative voting methods that have the potential to enhance fairness, voter engagement, and representation. By convening a diverse group of stakeholders—including legislators, election officials, local government representatives, academic experts, and civil rights advocates, the Task Force will ensure a comprehensive and balanced review of these systems. Such an inclusive approach is essential for evaluating administrative feasibility, fiscal impacts, and legal considerations before any changes are implemented.

Senate Bill 800 also prioritizes transparency and accountability by requiring the Task Force to examine best practices from other jurisdictions, assess impacts on voter participation and election outcomes, and develop actionable recommendations for legislative or administrative action. This deliberate and data-driven process will help Maryland identify opportunities to strengthen democratic participation while safeguarding election integrity.

I thank you for your time and I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike McKay".

Senator Mike McKay
Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland
Serving Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

2-25-26 Task Force on the Implementation of Approv

Uploaded by: Nancy Soreng

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
SB 800 Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting**

Position: Favorable

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: February 25, 2026

In 2014 the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County did a study of Instant Runoff Voting, also known as Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). In 2019 the fact sheet that accompanied this study was shared at our statewide convention. This is the position adopted by our members state-wide:

Support the option to use Instant Runoff Voting (IRV):

- 1. for single-seat or executive office elections, both at the state and county and local level. This would require the winner to receive a **majority of the votes cast**.*
- 2. to fill vacancies in any vacancies in any state or county offices, when special elections are held, instead of conducting both special political party primaries and a special general election.*

Support requiring all voting equipment (hardware and software) to accommodate IRV and require all voting equipment (hardware and software) for use in Maryland allow alternative ways of casting and counting ballots and be usable for all county and municipal elections.

Our League members found that having a deeper understanding about Rank Choice Voting and its benefits and how it has been implemented in other jurisdictions, made them much more supportive of the concept. Therefore, we do support the idea of a task force as outlined in SB 800 because it seems that the General Assembly, for some time, has been struggling with understanding the benefits and how it can be implemented in Maryland.

For at least five years Montgomery County has been asking for the authority to move forward with implementation of RCV in their county. The findings of this task force might be helpful for that effort

We request a favorable report on SB 800.

SB0800_FAV_MDForwardParty_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Philip Benenati

Position: FAV



MARYLAND FORWARD PARTY

Not Left. Not Right. Forward.

BILL NO: SB0800

TITLE: Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked–Choice Voting

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy and the Environment

POSITION: FAVORABLE

DATE: February 23, 2026

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee

FROM: Maryland Forward Party

SUBJECT: Study In Theory And In Practice

Maryland Forward Party **supports SB0800** as studies on alternative voting methods encourage a vibrant democratic process. In complement to SB0800’s proposed Task Force, through HB0580, this Committee has the opportunity to encourage support for actual employment of ranked-choice voting (RCV) and approval voting, enabling legislation in one of Maryland’s largest communities, Montgomery County.

Maryland Forward Party urges the Committee to **issue a favorable report for SB0800** and show support where possible for HB0580. These proposals align well because of:

- **Proven Benefits:** Studies clearly show RCV “is an improvement over plurality voting with clear benefits in terms of representation, campaign quality, mobilization, and turnout [and] that RCV encourages greater consensus building as well as more civil political campaigns.”¹
- **Seamless Rollout:** A Task Force studying the impact of RCV or approval voting statewide would provide for a seamless rollout of any future adoption. We encourage the thoughtful implementation of new voting procedures to mitigate against any unexpected fiscal costs or voter confusion, and we thank Senator McKay for introducing this Task Force.
- **Aligned Goals:** Montgomery County’s requests, as reflected in HB0580, are perfectly aligned with the goal of SB0800 and the proposed Task Force, which is to “review how approval voting and ranked–choice voting are used in other states and local jurisdictions in the United States.” Support for Montgomery County to move forward directly supports this objective and provides an opportunity for the Task Force to study an active rollout in one of Maryland’s largest jurisdictions.

¹ Eveline Dowling and Caroline Tolbert, American Bar Association, *What We Know About Ranked Choice Voting, Updated for 2025*, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/election_law/american-democracy/our-work/what-we-know-about-ranked-choice-voting-2025/.



MARYLAND FORWARD PARTY

Not Left. Not Right. Forward.

- **Actionable Local Data:** Given the opportunity, Montgomery County's consideration and potential implementation of RCV or approval voting would provide the Task Force with concrete data on the implementation of alternative voting methods locally. In addition to the data available from jurisdictions already employing or considering employment of RCV in Maryland (e.g., Takoma Park and Greenbelt), implementation in Montgomery County—which is ready, willing, and able—would provide the Task Force with invaluable, real-world feedback from Marylanders actually implementing these increasingly common voting methods.

Maryland Forward Party believes that studying and piloting alternative voting methods is the most pragmatic path to a modern electoral system. Together, HB0580 and SB0800 would result in significant, actionable data for the state of Maryland regarding future voting reforms. We encourage the Committee to honor Montgomery County's repeated requests to conduct its own review, and we respectfully **urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0800.**

Sincerely,

Lee Bradshaw

Legislative Committee Chair

Maryland Forward Party

Testimony in support of SB0800 - Voting Methods Ta

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

02/25/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0800- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0800, **Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting**

This bill will have two purposes. It will study alternative methods to improve how we elect our leaders and create a task force for that study. The report on that study can guide Maryland and the General Assembly session in 2028 to adopt better processes for the conduct of elections in Maryland.

The Election Science Organization defines *What is Approval Voting?*¹

Approval voting is a method in which voters are allowed to select any number of candidates they approve of, rather than just one. In essence, it offers voters the opportunity to express their support for multiple candidates, without having to rank them in any specific order. The candidate with the highest overall approval, or the most votes, wins the election. Consequently, approval voting promotes consensus-building and diminishes polarization among voters, as candidates must strive to appeal to a wider range of supporters to secure victory in elections.

Ranked Vote has studied *Understanding Ranked Choice Voting - Pros and Cons*² and answered why the cons are not realistic.

Ranked choice voting allows you to show the *strength* of your preference amongst a set of choices. You order your choices from most preferred to least and cast your vote. That's all there is to it.

Advantages of Ranked Choice Voting

- Determines the candidate with the strongest support
- Encourages civil campaigning
- Reduces wasted votes
- Eliminates the need for multiple elections

This bill will establish the Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting; and require the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2027.

This Task Force can provide the data needed for an intelligent decision on how to proceed in Maryland to address these possible changes to voting in our state.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0800.

¹ <https://electionscience.org/education/approval-voting>

² <https://www.rankedvote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/pros-and-cons-of-rcv>

VAVMD_SB0800_FWA_Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Pellittiere

Position: FWA

SB 800 | FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

ENERGY, EDUCATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE | 25 FEB 2026

Our Perspective

Veterans for Maryland Voters represents a community of Maryland veterans from all walks of life—spanning from constitutional conservatives to progressives. We are united by a shared belief that Marylanders deserve an election system that is as functional and resilient as the people it serves. Having taken an oath to defend our democracy, we view our support for election modernization as a continuation of that service. We want a system that is fair, transparent, and representative of every citizen's voice.

As veterans, we have a unique appreciation for "mission readiness"—and that applies to our election systems. We have previously asked for big changes; this is not one of them. This is a common-sense request for a data-driven study of our democratic tools.

A History of Common-Sense Evolution

There is a misconception that our current voting method is a static, sacred tradition. In reality, it was a practical solution to a period of chaos. In our country's early days, voting was often done aloud in public squares.¹ In the 1800s, Maryland elections were often marred by "party strip" ballots that led to intimidation and even deadly violence in the streets of Baltimore.²

Our current "Australian Ballot" was adopted in the late 1880s specifically to restore order and voter privacy.³ However, the world has changed since the 19th century. In 1918, Australia realized that a "plurality-takes-all" system often failed to produce leaders with

¹ National Endowment for the Humanities, **Back When Everyone Knew How You Voted**, Fall 2016, <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2016/fall/feature/back-when-everyone-knew-how-you-voted>.

² National Endowment for the Humanities, **Gangs of Baltimore**, May/June 2008, <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2008/mayjune/feature/gangs-baltimore>.

³ Congressional Research Service, **Election Policy Fundamentals: The Secret Ballot**, July 5, 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12389>

broad, majority support. They transitioned to Ranked Choice Voting to ensure their representatives truly reflected a consensus of the people.⁴

Maryland should not be afraid to look at the data and see if our current tools are still the best ones for the modern era.

Proposed Amendments: Ensuring a Fair & Balanced Study

To ensure this Task Force produces a rigorous, unbiased roadmap rather than a partisan recommendation, VAV requests the following:

1. Membership

- **Add:** Two representatives from organizations with expertise in **Ranked Choice Voting**.
- **Add:** Two representatives from organizations with expertise in **Approval Voting**.
- **Increase:** The number of general **election systems experts** by two.
- **Clarify:** The local board of elections representative should be designated by the **Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO)**.

Rationale: A study is only as good as its data. Most reform advocates specialize in one method. To get an unbiased recommendation, the Task Force needs experts from both the RCV and Approval Voting camps, alongside the frontline professionals who actually run our elections.

2. Scope

- **Add:** Direct the Task Force to focus on implementation for **state-level offices** (General Assembly and statewide seats) only.
- **Add:** Require a specific look at how these methods could achieve **proportional representation** in Maryland's multi-member districts.

Why: State law and municipal law are different animals. By focusing on state offices, we keep the Task Force's work actionable. Furthermore, we need to know if these systems can better reflect the diversity of thought in our three-delegate districts.

⁴ Australian Electoral Commission, **A short history of federal electoral reform in Australia**, October 8, 2019, <https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/history-of-electoral-reform.htm>

3. Timeline

- **Modify:** Set the report deadline to **December 1, 2026**.

Why: This ensures the General Assembly has a finished product in hand before the 2027 session begins.

Conclusion

Veterans for Maryland Voters isn't asking to upend the system overnight. We are simply asking for a seat at the table to study how we can make our Republic more resilient, more representative, and more secure. We urge a **favorable report** on SB 800 with these amendments.

Mike Pellittiere

Volunteer State Leader
Odenton, MD

Veterans for All Voters

veteransforallvoters.org
8816 Manchester Road, Suite #101
Brentwood, MO 63144

SB 800 (HB 1289) - Owen Anderson, RCVMD Testimony

Uploaded by: Owen Anderson

Position: FWA

February 23, 2026

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Senate Bill 800 - Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting
- Favorable with Amendments**

Dear Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members:

On behalf of Ranked Choice Voting Maryland, we are providing favorable support with amendments on **SB 800 (HB 1289)**, *Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting*.

The task force could provide insightful information for legislators and election administrators to strengthen Maryland's democracy. As more local jurisdictions in Maryland explore or adopt ranked choice voting, the task force could provide clearer guidance on how a new voting method could be implemented for state level elections.

We strongly recommend the following amendments:

- **Membership** - Add three (3) additional Task Force members, with specific expertise in RCV, approval voting, and election systems in general.
- **Scope** - The Task Force should only evaluate state-level offices (General Assembly and statewide) to respect municipal independence as it relates to election law. In addition, the task force should evaluate how these voting methods improve or allow for fair representation.
- **Reporting Date** - We support modifying the effective reporting date to December 1, 2026 so that findings and recommendations can be used in next year's session of the General Assembly.

Detailed text of the suggested amendments is included on the next page of this written testimony.

We respectfully ask the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to give SB800 full consideration and a favorable report with amendments.

Sincerely,



Owen Anderson
Deputy Director

Ranked Choice Voting Maryland
8484 Georgia Avenue, Ste 240
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Suggested Amendments to HB 1289 / SB 800

Amendment 1 - Task Force Members

ADD: two representatives from state and national organizations with expertise with ranked choice voting

ADD: two representatives from state and national organizations with expertise with approval voting

INCREASE: two individuals with expertise in election systems

MODIFY: one representative of ~~a local board of elections~~ the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO)

Reason: The bill creates a 10-member task force. The suggested amendments add 3 additional members with specific expertise in RCV, approval voting, and election systems in general.

Amendment 2 - Scope of Task Force

ADD: focus on implementation for approval voting and ranked-choice voting for state-level elections (General Assembly and statewide offices) only

ADD: examine the use of approval voting and ranked-choice voting to achieve proportional representation with multi-member districts

Reason: The task force should only evaluate state-level offices because municipalities are not governed by state election law. In addition, it would be beneficial to understand if these voting methods improve or allow for fair representation.

Amendment 3 - Effective Date

MODIFY: On or before December 1, 2027

Reason: Setting the effective day to December 1, 2026 allows for legislation in the 2027 General Assembly session.

Deb Otis Maryland SB 800_IN SUPPORT with AMENDMENT

Uploaded by: Yates Wilburn

Position: FWA

Testimony from:
Deb Otis, Director of Research and Policy at FairVote Action

In SUPPORT with amendments of SB 800
February 25, 2026
Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express FairVote Action's support for SB 800. This bill will create a state task force to study the implementation of alternative voting methods – including ranked choice voting – in local and state elections in Maryland.

We support the goal of this task force, as adopting ranked choice voting in state and/or local elections in Maryland would: (1) offer voters more choices on their ballots; (2) promote more positive, issues-focused campaigns; (3) create a more level playing field for female candidates and candidates of color; and (4) when used in primaries, can help parties nominate more consistently viable candidates who bring their party together.

We hope the committee adopts amendments to SB 800 recommended in written testimony submitted to this committee by Owen Anderson, Deputy Director of RCV Maryland. These amendments would clarify which organizations will participate in the task force and ensure all stakeholders can participate, including organizations with subject-matter expertise.

FairVote Action is a national nonpartisan organization that educates and advocates for election reforms. We are seen as a leading national resource on ranked choice voting (RCV). I am the Director of Policy and Research for FairVote Action and, as part of my job, I study the impacts of RCV in the places that use it.

Approximately 14 million voters in approximately 50 jurisdictions across the U.S. use RCV in public elections. It is an increasingly popular, party-neutral electoral reform with successes including:

- New York City held the largest citywide RCV election in U.S. history in 2025. The city's successful voter education campaigns have resulted in much higher voter turnout than previous non-RCV primaries, a high use of rankings, and a low error rate.¹ In 2025, 96% of voters said voting with RCV was simple and 76% said they would like to keep or expand RCV,² with the 2021 RCV primaries seeing similar levels of voter understanding and support.³

¹ [Ranked choice voting in New York City's 2025 primaries: an in-depth analysis](#). FairVote. (2025).

² [96% of NYC Democratic Primary Voters Say Ranked Choice Ballots Were Simple to Fill Out; ¾ Want to Keep or Expand Ranked Choice; 8 of 10 Say They Understand RCV Extremely or Very Well](#). SurveyUSA. (2025).

³ [Rank the Vote NYC Releases Edison Research Exit Poll on the Election](#). Rank the Vote NYC. (2021).

- Alaska became the first state to elect its governor, state legislature, and federal offices using RCV. 84%⁴ of Alaska voters said the system was simple to use and 60%⁵ said it resulted in more competitive races than past elections.
- Legislatures in 14 states have passed RCV bills since 2020, including “local options” legislation that allows municipalities in Maine, Virginia, and Colorado to use RCV.⁶
- Five Democratic presidential primaries and caucuses used RCV ballots in 2020. In 2024, voters in Maine used RCV ballots in both major parties’ presidential primaries, and the U.S. Virgin Islands Republican Party used RCV in its presidential primary.⁷
- Voters have approved RCV ballot measures in 33 of the last 34 cities to vote on it, and in Maine and Alaska.⁸

In RCV elections, voters may rank candidates in order of preference: first, second, third, and so on. If a candidate receives more than half of the first choices, they win, just like any other election. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as “number 1” will have their votes count for their next choice. This process continues until one candidate wins a majority.

Voter Support and Understanding of Ranked Choice Voting

RCV offers voters greater choice, creating space for both voters and candidates to express a wide range of views. Voters may rank as many or as few candidates as they like but, in practice, most voters choose to use multiple rankings in order to express their full preferences.

A median of 68% of voters choose to rank multiple candidates.⁹ In highly competitive or highly publicized elections, the rate is even higher. In 2024, for example, 85% of Portland voters ranked multiple candidates for mayor and 91% ranked multiple candidates for city council.¹⁰ In 2025, 78% of New York City voters ranked multiple candidates for mayor.¹¹ Of those who reported only ranking one candidate, 87% said “That was the only candidate I liked.”¹²

Voters like and understand RCV. Exit polling finds that voters in RCV cities overwhelmingly report that they like RCV and prefer it to their previous voting method.¹³

⁴ [Exit Polling Shows Alaskans Found Ranked Choice Voting Simple](#). Alaskans for Better Elections. (2024).

⁵ [Polling Shows Alaskan Voters Received Clear Instructions on the System. Found Ranking to be “Simple,” and saw more Competitive Races](#). Alaskans for Better Elections. (2022).

⁶ [Ranked choice voting legislation](#). FairVote. (2025).

⁷ [The 2024 presidential primaries and ranked choice voting](#). FairVote. (2024).

⁸ [Ballot measures](#). FairVote. (2025).

⁹ [Research and data on RCV in practice](#). FairVote. (2026).

¹⁰ [Ranked choice voting debuts in Portland: Vast majority ranked their ballots and elected a candidate of choice](#). FairVote. (2024).

¹¹ [Ranked choice voting in New York City's 2025 primaries: An in-depth analysis](#). FairVote. (2025).

¹² [96% of NYC Democratic Primary Voters Say Ranked Choice Ballots Were Simple to Fill Out; ¾ Want to Keep or Expand Ranked Choice; 8 of 10 Say They Understand RCV Extremely or Very Well](#). SurveyUSA. (2025).

¹³ [Exit Surveys: Voters Love Ranked Choice Voting](#). FairVote. (2025).

In Utah, 82% of RCV voters said RCV is easy to use and 94% were satisfied with the method they used to cast their ballot.¹⁴

In New York City, 96% of poll respondents found the ballot simple and 76% want to keep using RCV.¹⁴ In Alaska, 92% of voters said they received instructions on how to rank their choices,¹⁵ and 84% said RCV was “simple,” including supermajorities of every ethnic group.¹⁶

Voters not only find RCV easy to use, but they understand it intuitively, especially compared to other electoral reforms. Survey data shows that more voters understand RCV than the “top-two” systems used in California and Washington.¹⁷ Researchers have found no evidence of racial or ethnic differences in understanding of RCV.¹⁸ Voter support for RCV tends to increase over time, as voters get more chances to use it.¹⁹

Ranked Choice Voting Improves Campaigns & Delivers Representative Outcomes

Research shows that RCV decreases negative campaigning because candidates need to reach beyond a single base of voters – and connect with more voters in order to win. Sometimes, this means appealing to be the second or third choice of voters who support a different candidate as their first choice. Studies have found that candidates use more positive language in debates,²⁰ voters in RCV cities perceive less negativity compared to voters in non-RCV cities,^{21,22} and newspaper articles in RCV cities are more positive than in non-RCV cities.²³ As seen in the 2025 New York City mayoral primary, candidates may also “cross-endorse” and campaign together in RCV elections.²⁴

RCV is particularly well-suited for elections with crowded fields, like those often seen in primary elections in Maryland. RCV ensures that elections are won with majorities without the need for costly runoff elections – where turnout drops by a median of 41%.²⁵

Importantly, RCV addresses the problems of vote-splitting and “spoiler” candidates that sometimes result in election winners who lack majority support. In our current system, a majority of voters may support a particular ideology or party, but split their votes among candidates who support that ideology – allowing a candidate to win with a *minority* of the

¹⁴ [An Evaluation of the Ranked Choice Voting Pilot in Utah](#). Parry, A., Kidd, J., Erickson, M., & Scott, A. (2024).

¹⁵ [Alaska Exit Poll Results – New Election System](#). Patinkin Research Strategies. (2022).

¹⁶ [Exit Polling Shows Alaskans Found Ranked Choice Voting Simple](#). Alaskans for Better Elections. (2024).

¹⁷ [Poll shows Bay Area voters like ranked choice voting and are interested in proportional representation](#). FairVote. (2025).

¹⁸ [Self-Reported Understanding of Ranked-Choice Voting](#). Donovan, T., Tolbert, C. and Gracey, K. Social Science Quarterly. (2019).

¹⁹ [The 2017 Municipal Election: An Analysis & Recommendations](#). Minneapolis City Council. (2018).

²⁰ [Effect of Instant Run-off Voting on Participation and Civility](#). McGinn, E. (2020).

²¹ [Socioeconomic and Demographic Perspectives on Ranked Choice Voting in the Bay Area](#). FairVote. (2015).

²² [Santa Fe Voters Support Ranked Choice Voting and Have High Confidence in City Elections](#). FairVote. (2018).

²³ [Using Campaign Communications to Analyze Civility in Ranked Choice Voting Elections](#). Kropf, M. Politics and Governance. (2021).

²⁴ [Ranked choice voting in New York City's 2025 primaries: an in-depth analysis](#). FairVote. (2025).

²⁵ [Low Turnout and High Cost in primary runoffs, 1994-2024](#). FairVote. (2024)

vote. For example, Green Party candidates Jill Stein and Ralph Nader won enough votes to affect the outcomes in key swing states in the 2016 and 2000 presidential elections.^{26,27} Had RCV been used in those states, voters could have ranked the Green candidate 1st and then ranked either the Democratic or Republican candidate as their 2nd choice. The spoiler problem became relevant in the 2024 presidential election as well – with these concerns raised about Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.; Jill Stein; and a possible “No Labels” candidate throughout the campaign.

Recent research has found that RCV tends to result in greater election rates for women and candidates of color.^{28,29,30} Research also points to several RCV elections where voters of color were more likely to rank multiple candidates on their ballot.^{31,32,33}

This has played out in practice in cities across the country – in RCV elections, voters elected the first-ever majority-female City Council in New York City;³⁴ the first all-female City Council in Las Cruces, New Mexico;³⁵ the first Alaska Native member of Congress;³⁶ and the first majority-people of color City Councils in Minneapolis³⁷ and Salt Lake City.³⁸ In 2023, St. Paul elected an all-female city council where all members were under the age of 40 and 90% were women of color.³⁹ In 2025, the city elected its first woman and Hmong American mayor.⁴⁰

RCV’s simplicity, representative outcomes, and positive experience for voters have made it an increasingly popular election method. It is recommended by Robert’s Rules of Order and used in hundreds of private association elections.⁴¹ RCV is also fully constitutional, having been twice upheld in federal courts, including in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2011 and in federal district courts in Maine in 2018 and 2020.⁴²

²⁶ [Federal Elections 2016: Election Results for the U.S. President, The U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives](#). Federal Election Commission. (2017).

²⁷ [November 7, 2000 General Election](#). Florida Department of State. Division of Elections. (2020).

²⁸ [In Ranked Choice Elections, Women Win, RCV in the United States: A Decade in Review](#). Represent Women. (2020).

²⁹ [The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities?](#) John, S., Smith, H., & Zack, E. Electoral Studies. (2018).

³⁰ [Election Reform and Women’s Representation: Ranked Choice Voting in the U.S.](#). Terrell, C., Lamendola, C., & Reilly, M. Politics and Governance. (2021).

³¹ [Ranked Choice Voting Elections Benefit Candidates and Voters of Color: 2024 update](#). FairVote. (2024)

³² [Whose Votes Count?: Undervotes, Overvotes, and Ranking in San Francisco’s Instant-Runoff Elections](#). Neely, F. and Cook, C. American Politics Research. (2008).

³³ [Ranked Choice Voting Elections Benefit Candidates and Voters of Color](#). FairVote. (2021).

³⁴ [The Next City Council Will Look More Like New York](#). The New York Times. (2021).

³⁵ [Women set to represent all six Las Cruces city council districts](#). Las Cruces Sun News. (2021).

³⁶ [Peltola to become first Alaska Native, first female Alaska congresswoman](#). KTUU. (2022).

³⁷ [A Minneapolis first: Candidates of color win a majority of City Council seats](#). The Minnesota Star Tribune. (2021).

³⁸ [Historic Salt Lake council majority LGBTQ, people of color](#). The Associated Press. (2022).

³⁹ [St. Paul makes history with all-female city council, a rarity among large US cities](#). The Associated Press. (2024).

⁴⁰ [Kaohly Her, first woman and Hmong St. Paul mayor-elect shares plans for office](#). Minnesota Public Radio. (2025).

⁴¹ [Instant runoff voting used for major organizational elections based on Robert’s Rules of Order](#). FairVote. (2009).

⁴² [Ranked-Choice Voting: Legal Challenges and Considerations for Congress](#). Congressional Research Service. (2022).

The expansion or support of RCV has come before the Maryland legislature in previous years. RCV is already used for local elections in Takoma Park, and voters in Greenbelt voted to bring RCV to their local elections in 2025.⁴³ With so many more prominent examples of its impact and a greater understanding of how to administer RCV effectively, the evidence in its favor has never been stronger. Voters like RCV and engage with the ranked ballot. Parties can produce strong nominees with RCV. And implementation is a smooth process.^{44,45} In most cities using RCV, preliminary results are produced on election night or the day after – the same timeline as in single-choice elections.⁴⁶ Case studies of two Colorado cities that recently implemented ranked choice voting – Boulder in 2023 and Fort Collins in 2025 – offer best practices on smooth RCV implementation.^{47,48}

FairVote Action asks the committee to support SB 800 with the amendments recommended by RCV Maryland, and we are available to answer any other questions from the committee or provide additional data. FairVote Action can also advise the legislature as it deems fit and be a resource for RCV implementation. You can reach me at dotis@fairvoteaction.org and my FairVote Action colleagues at info@fairvoteaction.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Director of Policy and Research at FairVote Action

⁴³ [Greenbelt, MD voters approve ranked choice voting](#). FairVote. (2025).

⁴⁴ Additional resources on RCV implementation are available from the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center at www.RCVResources.org.

⁴⁵ [Ranked Choice Voting in Practice: Implementation Considerations for Policymakers](#). NCSL. (2022).

⁴⁶ [79% of jurisdictions release RCV results within 24 hours](#). FairVote. (2025).

⁴⁷ Boulder Ranked Choice Voting. Citizen Data. (2023)

⁴⁸ Larimer County 2025 Coordinated Election Results. Larimer County. (2025).

2026 HB0800 Testimony Against 2026-02-25.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: UNF

Testimony Against SB0800

Honorable Senators

Please enter an unfavorable decision about SB0800.

I am opposed to

- Establishing the Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting; and
- requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2027.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is not the panacea to better elections as many supporters claim and it is difficult to audit the results of an RCV election. Most RCV models I have seen discussed use a complicated, iterative process when no candidates receive a majority of the votes cast. The candidate in a field of n candidates, who receives the fewest votes is eliminated, and that candidate's second third, fourth and nth votes are allocated to the remaining candidates. This process is continued until a candidate receives a majority of the allowed votes are cast. This iterative process is difficult to program and may not leave an audit trail to ensure that the process worked as intended.

In some elections, voters must rank all the candidates in the race. If any candidate is omitted, that ballot is not considered valid and rejected. Voters new to the RCV process, which requires voter training, can get confused and accidentally omit a candidate, or in races where candidates regardless of party are combined, a voter who refuses to vote for someone from another party, their votes are discounted. Dropping records makes it more difficult to ensure voter integrity as now not all votes cast are counted. How does one ensure that all the dropped records are because the rules were not followed or dropped due to a programming error?

The RCV theory is that those candidates who are considered extreme in their views, strongly liked by some, yet strongly disliked by others will not do well and more moderate candidates will become the consensus second choice. With RCV, one can end up with a candidate that no one really liked, but was disliked the least. Also, many of the RCV elections either skip the primary or combine the parties in the primary and narrow the field to a more manageable number of candidates. By combining the parties, RCV could convert Maryland elections to a de facto open election, allowing unaffiliated voters to have a bigger say in the outcome of Democrat and Republican candidates.

Please enter an unfavorable decision about SB0236.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
Harwood, Maryland 20776
Legislative District 30B
410-336-9745
Alanlang1@verizon.net

February 9, 2026

SB0800 Task Force on RCV-Approval Voting UNF v2.pd

Uploaded by: SHARON CARRICK

Position: UNF



February 23, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senate of Maryland, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **SB0800** – Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting -
UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The 1,308 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly oppose SB0800.

Ranked Choice Voting is majority rule only when the winning candidate is determined in Round 1. That is the only round where all votes originally cast are counted. In all subsequent rounds, votes of some voters are excluded from the count.

Millions of voters around the country voted against Ranked Choice Voting initiatives in the 2024 election — Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Oregon. Ranked Choice Voting had already been banned in 5 additional states – Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, South Dakota, Tennessee.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) will:

- **Reduce a voter’s ability to make an informed decision** -- choosing alternative candidates (2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. choices) without knowing all who remain in the race at a particular point in time is unfair. That voting method is appropriate only when all voters are in the same location at the time of subsequent votes.
- **Increase voter confusion and the potential for “spoiled” ballots.**
 - A single erasure or strike-through could invalidate the entire ballot. Voters who wait until the deadline to complete their ballot then make an error will not have time to secure a replacement ballot.
 - Mailed ballot voters will have no one present to explain the new, complicated process (nearly 600,000 voters in the 2024 Primary Election).
 - Ballots from other 2024 U.S. elections demonstrate the inadequacy of ballot instructions:
 - Page 3 -- sample 2024 ballot -- City of Portland OR -- voters were instructed to rank up to 6 of 19 candidates.
 - Page 4 -- 2024 Presidential election ballot -- State of Maine.
- **Complicate and slow the process of counting votes and certifying election results.**
 - The more candidates and positions involved, the more cumbersome and tedious the process. In 2022, each Maryland jurisdiction had at least 23 offices on the ballot, in addition to ballot questions.
 - Under both Approval Voting and Ranked Choice Voting, voters will need much longer to make 3 or more choices for each position on the ballot.
 - Some election day voters are likely to walk away from the polls if the line is too long or moving too slowly.
- **Undermine the public’s confidence in election results** -- moving from the easily understood “one vote per office” to complex and confusing formulas for tallying votes.

- Result in increased numbers of voters **skipping down-ballot races**. Statistics already show a decrease in the number of votes cast in those very important local races (including school board).
- Negatively impact a jurisdiction’s ability to close polls on time.

Primary elections exist to allow voters to scrutinize candidates and choose the most qualified to represent their political party in the General Election.

The Maryland General Assembly has made numerous changes to election law and voting processes in recent years (Early Voting, Mail-In Voting, Drop Off Boxes, Same Day Voter Registration and Voting, etc.) with no increase in voter turnout, the main justification for those changes. A review of the Maryland State Board of Elections' Official Turnout Reports for the 2022 General Election, voter turnout was down 10 percent statewide from the 2018 General Election.

The decrease in voter turnout (2018 vs 2022) was greatest in Maryland’s largest counties, where turnout dropped 10 to 15 percent:

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>% Drop Off in Voting</i>
Prince George’s County	15%
Charles County	13%
Montgomery County	12%
Baltimore City	11%
Baltimore County	10%
Howard County	10%

Both Approval Voting and Ranked Choice Voting will confuse voters, undermine confidence in the election process, and make people question election results. Approval Voting degrades the sacred duty of voting for our elected officials to a popularity contest. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is confusing and manipulative.

At this time of severe budget constraints, spending money on a Task Force to implement either Approval Voting or Ranked Choice Voting is wasteful, especially when budget areas such as aid for the developmentally disabled and pre-school scholarships are being cut.

We don’t need a Task Force to tell Marylanders that these alternative voting methods will cost more time and tax dollars with no positive impacts on their sacred right to vote.

We already have the most democratic voting process – the candidate receiving the most votes (without complicated elimination rounds) wins.

For all of these reasons, please vote an **UNFAVORABLE** report on **SB0800**.

Sincerely,

Ella Ennis
 Legislative Co-Chair
 (443) 295-3989

Sharon Carrick
 Legislative Co-Chair
 (301) 464-1954

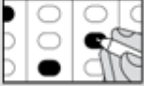
Sample ballot -- 2024 -- City of Portland OR

Official Ballot
Multnomah County
November 5, 2024


3303-1

THIS IS NOT A REAL BALLOT. DO NOT USE TO VOTE.


Ranked Choice Voting Instructions
 Use a blue or black pen.



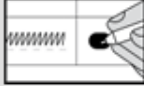
Rank candidates in the order of your choice.



Fill in no more than one oval in a rank column.



Fill in no more than one oval on a candidate row.



To add a candidate who is not on the ballot, write the candidate's name on the write-in line and fill in a rank.

City of Portland, Mayor [4-year term]
 Rank up to 6 candidates in the order of your choice.

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Durrell Kinsey Bey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Martin Ward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keith Wilson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dustin Witherspoon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Michael O'Callaghan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Liv (Viva) Østhus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rene Gonzalez	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alexander Landry Neely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Michael Necula	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sharon Nasset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sadiq Ali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
James Atkinson IV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
She/Meka (BeUtee) As-Salaam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mingus Mapps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
James Macdonald	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Josh Leake	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yao Jun He	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Michael Hayes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Carmen Rubio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

City of Portland, Auditor [2-year term]
 Rank up to 2 candidates in the order of your choice.

	Rank 1	Rank 2
Simone Rede	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Actual ballot used in 2024 -- State of Maine

CG District 1 SS District 27 SR District 116 Cumberland District 4

State of Maine Official Ballot General Election, November 5, 2024

Instructions to Voters

To vote, fill in the oval like this: ●

To rank your candidate choices, fill in the oval:

- + In the 1st column for your 1st choice candidate.
- + In the 2nd column for your 2nd choice candidate, and so on.

Continue until you have ranked as many or as few candidates as you like.

Fill in only one oval in each column (ranking).

To rank a Write-in candidate, write the person's name in the Write-in space and fill in the oval for the ranking of your choice.

To have your vote count, do not erase or cross out your choice.

If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot.

President Vice President	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	6th Choice
Harris, Kamala D. Walz, Tim Democratic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oliver, Chase ter Maat, Mike Libertarian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stein, Jill Ware, Rudolph Green Independent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump, Donald J. Vance, James D. Republican	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
West, Cornel Abdullah, Melina Justice for All	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



SB 800_HB 1289_ Task Force on the Implementation

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

SB 800/HB 1289: Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Government, Labor & Elections Committee & Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to express my strong **opposition** to Senate Bill 800 and its cross-filed House Bill 1289, "Task Force on the Implementation of Approval Voting and Ranked-Choice Voting."

While studying election reforms can have value, creating a formal task force to explore approval voting and ranked-choice voting (RCV) sends the wrong signal and risks paving the way for changes that **could complicate Maryland's elections, confuse voters, and undermine confidence in our democratic process.**

Key concerns include:

- **Complexity and voter confusion:** Ranked-choice voting requires voters to rank candidates (sometimes many), leading to "exhausted" ballots where preferences run out, potentially disenfranchising voters who don't fully understand the system. Approval voting allows voting for multiple candidates but can produce winners without majority support in traditional terms and may encourage strategic voting or bullet voting.
- **Implementation challenges and costs:** Changing ballot designs, voting machines, tabulation software, voter education, and recount procedures statewide or locally would be expensive and logistically difficult, especially for smaller jurisdictions. **Past pilots elsewhere have shown high error rates, longer counting times, and disputes over results.**
- **Risk to election integrity and transparency:** These systems are harder for average citizens to audit or understand compared to simple plurality voting. They **can lead to outcomes perceived as unfair (e.g., a candidate wins without a plurality of first-choice votes), eroding trust in elections** at a time when public confidence is already fragile.
- **Unnecessary distraction:** Maryland's current system is straightforward, familiar, and effective. **Resources should focus on securing existing processes—such as voter ID consistency, ballot access fairness, and cybersecurity—**rather than experimenting with unproven alternatives that could fragment support or favor certain political strategies.

A task force dedicated to these methods implies endorsement of pursuing them, potentially leading to future legislation that imposes them on unwilling voters or jurisdictions. **Maryland should prioritize simplicity, verifiability, and broad**

accessibility in elections over adopting complex systems that have mixed results in other places.

I urge the Committee to **give SB 800/HB 1289 an unfavorable report** and prevent its passage.

Our elections work best when they are easy to understand, transparent, and trusted by all Marylanders—goals better served by strengthening our current framework than by studying radical overhauls.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals