

February 16, 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26 - FAV

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members:

I am a retired software engineer and resident of Montgomery County for over 30 years. And I urge your support for HB 580 - Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26.

As I am sure you are aware, RCV eliminates the perverse incentive for a candidate to cynically surreptitiously support their main opponent's competitors. This feature of election by plurality creates cynicism in the electoral process when a candidate wins by splitting his or her opposition. Then it creates disaffection with the resulting minority rule.

RCV eliminates the ability of a candidate to manipulate an election by supporting a spoiler, and ensures the winner is the best representative of the will of the majority.

The University of Chicago Center for Effective Government finds (<https://effectivegov.uchicago.edu/primers/ranked-choice-voting>):

"Replacing current methods of electing officials in the US with ranked-choice voting (RCV) would make it more likely that broadly popular candidates would be elected. It would also give voters more choice, allow voters to express their preferences more fully and honestly, produce less polarized and negative political competition, and encourage the election of women and minority candidates."

The non-partisan Campaign Legal Center Issue Brief: The Civic Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting notes these benefits from RCV:

(<https://campaignlegal.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/CLC%20Issue%20Brief%20RCV%20PDF.pdf>)

- 1. Ranked choice voting encourages greater civility and less negative campaigning among candidates, as well as more direct outreach by candidates to voters.*
- 2. Ranked choice voting is more majoritarian and more democratic than traditional plurality voting.*
- 3. Ranked choice voting encourages a greater number of candidates with more diverse backgrounds and views to run for office.*
- 4. Because ranked choice voting encourages more diverse candidates to run for office, it may, in turn, reduce political polarization.*
Political polarization is high in traditional plurality elections. Turnout is low and candidates may win simply by mobilizing and championing the views of a core group of committed supporters, who are often more ideologically extreme than the broader electorate. Plurality voting further exacerbates polarization because it typically results in a contest between only two candidates, leaving voters with a purely binary choice between individuals who are more partisan than the average citizen.

The non-partisan New York Fiscal Policy Institute wrote about New York City's move to RCV in "Ranked Choice Voting: Saving Money While Improving Elections":

(<https://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/RankedChoiceVoting-FPI-Brief.pdf>)

Ranked choice voting is attractive because it allows voters to more fully express their preferences, and it provides very real incentives for candidates to engage in less negative campaigning and make a more positive appeal to a broader range of voters. In a race with three, four, or more candidates, the dynamic changes significantly if candidates are not only vying for the first choice of voters, but also for their second or third choices. If, for example, one candidate has a strong constituency in Staten Island, for example—or among black voters, or libertarians, or service sector workers—under the current voting system the other candidates will likely cede those voters and look elsewhere to establish a different “base.” Under ranked choice voting, by contrast, all candidates would have an incentive not to divide up different “bases,” but rather to compete for the second-choice votes across the board.

Ranked choice allows voters to express their support for the candidate they find compelling, elect a candidate they find acceptable, and avoid splitting a constituency and unintentionally putting into office a candidate they oppose.

Because voters have expressed in the single ballot their first, second, and other choices ranked choice voting would eliminate the need for a runoff election when no candidate wins more than the required 40 percent of the election in the first round of voting, as is currently the case.

A robust democracy is critical to the health of the city, so cost should not be a primary consideration in deciding on the best voting system. Fiscal Policy Institute would favor ranked choice voting in other locations where there might be an added cost, for example in localities where the voting machines to handle ranked choice voting were not already in place. However, it is notable that in New York City this improvement to democracy would be accompanied by a modest cost savings.

The League of Women Voters of Maine wrote this about Maine's Ranked Choice Voting:

(<https://www.lwvme.org/RCV>)

Gives voters more meaningful choices: Ranked choice voting allows candidates from outside the two major parties to compete. It helps create a richer dialogue on the issues and increases the diversity of views available for voters to consider.

Eliminates spoilers and strategic voting: Ranked choice voting allows voters to support their favorite candidate without worrying that they might “throw their vote away,” or worse, split their votes with like-minded voters and unintentionally help elect the candidate they like the least.

Reduces negative campaigning: Candidates running in ranked choice elections must ask for second and, sometimes, third choice rankings. Voters are less likely to rank a candidate highly who is negative toward their preferred candidate.

Reduces the influence of money in politics: Campaigns and special interest groups spend a lot of money on negative advertising. By making negative advertising less effective, ranked choice voting reduces the need for, and influence of, money in politics.

The American Bar Association has found similar benefits in their research of published literature on the subject:

[\(https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/election_law/american-democracy/our-work/what-we-know-about-ranked-choice-voting-2025/\)](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/election_law/american-democracy/our-work/what-we-know-about-ranked-choice-voting-2025/)

In sum, the research provides evidence that RCV is an improvement over plurality voting with clear benefits in terms of representation, campaign quality, mobilization, and turnout. Research shows that RCV encourages greater consensus building as well as more civil political campaigns.

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As Drutman and Strano reported in 2021, “the research should also allay fears that RCV is too confusing or discriminatory: voters understand RCV, and learn to like it, too, particularly with experience.” That remains true today.

Because of these reasons I believe Ranked Choice Voting would be highly beneficial to Montgomery County, and every level of government, particularly this time political polarization, rancor, distrust, and cynicism.

Sincerely,

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