

## **Testimony in Favor of HB 580: Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26**

I am 75 years old and have lived in Maryland for most of those years. As such, I remember the early steps leading to Spiro Agnew becoming Richard Nixon's vice president and subsequently resigning in disgrace over a bribery scandal.

The story started with the 1966 Democratic primary for Maryland governor: The top three vote-getters were George Mahoney (30.21 percent), Carlton Sickles (29.84 percent) and Thomas Finan (27.31 percent), which left Mr. Mahoney as the winner. He was a segregationist who ran on the motto "Your home is your castle — protect it."

In the general election, which pitted Mr. Mahoney against Mr. Agnew, the liberals voted for Agnew. Yes, that's right: The liberals voted for Agnew and, of course, Agnew won. This election is seared in my memory as I was 16 years old at the time and had just started to pay close attention to politics and elections. It was clear to me (and nearly everyone) that the winner of the Democratic primary was not favored by a majority of the voters. There had to be a better way.

I now know the better way: If ranked-choice voting had been used in the Democratic primary in 1966, either Mr. Sickles or Mr. Finan would have won and history would have been changed for the better.

Even in more local elections, such as for Montgomery County Executive, it can be the case that voters would prefer any member of a certain group of candidates over others. Ranked-choice voting would lead to the election of candidates whose views are most consistent with those of the majority of voters. This in turn will make for a more representative government and more confidence among the citizens in that government.

As my opening discussion suggests, I would also advocate that ranked-choice voting be used in Maryland state-wide elections. I can understand how political leaders may be cautious about making such significant changes to voting methods. One way for the citizens of Maryland, and their representatives in Annapolis, to better understand the impact of using ranked-choice voting in state-wide elections is to observe how they work in county elections. Approving HB 580 will enable state officials to better understand the nuances of the use of ranked-choice voting in practice and to formulate appropriate state-wide policies.

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