

IndivisibleHoCoMD



February 16, 2026

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

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members:

On behalf of the 1700+ members of Howard County Indivisible, we urge your support for **HB 580**, *Montgomery County - Voting Methods MC 1-26*. We believe the time is right to allow Montgomery County to move forward with using new voting methods. Give county residents and leaders the power to choose what works best for them.

HB 580 is an enabling bill. It allows the county to take the next steps at the local level to explore a voting method that addresses issues that have happened repeatedly in county elections over the last decade.

Why HB 580 Matters

- Since 2014, every Democratic Primary County Executive race has been won with less than a majority of the vote.
- In 2022, 4 out of 7 Primary winners in district races won with less than a majority.

We may see split votes and non-majority winners in the upcoming 2026 primaries because of competitive races for county council and county executive. Voters want to turn down the temperature on negative politics and empower voters to have a stronger voice to elect and hold leaders accountable.

Give Montgomery County the ability to choose the best solution for their community.

We Have Strong Support

- The Montgomery County House Delegation voted unanimously in favor of HB 580 / MC 1-26.
- The bill is supported widely by county leaders, city leaders, community organizations, and residents.

No Impact on Current Elections

- HB 580 is enabling legislation. It does not mandate the use of a new voting method.
- HB 580 would go into effect in January 2027.

The benefits of ranked choice voting are proven and clear at the local and state level. We support ranked choice voting and we hope we can have productive discussion at the local level to move the best reform forward for the county.

Howard County Indivisible supports HB 580 as it better represents the preference of voters, providing a more representative, and stable, democracy.

Over 65 jurisdictions in the US use Ranked Choice Voting, including Takoma Park, MD. Recently Greenbelt and Washington DC voted, overwhelmingly, in favor of RCV.

Several studies support the benefits of RCV. A 2021 study shows that youth turnout was higher in cities with RCV^[1]. Younger voter turnout is about 9% more likely according to this study of about 10 RCV cities and 10 plurality control cities. In 2020, five state parties used ranked ballots in presidential primaries and no votes were wasted on candidates who dropped out before election day. Comparatively, 3 million votes were wasted in single choice states. In 2016, 700,000 republican votes were wasted. In the case of Arizona that was 16% of votes. In 2025, surveys in Utah and California bay area corroborate 2024 surveys in Alaska, Maine, and Oregon where 8 out of 10 people or more are satisfied with RCV and understand it well^[2].

[1] <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/3914>

[2] <https://fairvote.org/new-surveys-voters-love-ranked-choice-voting/>

Montgomery County has embraced innovation and led the way on other democracy reforms. Let's give Montgomery County the power to strengthen their elections!

We urge the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give HB 580 full consideration and a favorable report.

Sincerely,

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