

Testimony on HB 580 Montgomery County Voting Methods (Ranked Choice Voting)

I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 580 for the following reasons:

- Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) makes voting more complicated and discourages participation. Voter drop-off already occurs in down-ballot races. Adding a longer, more confusing process will further discourage voter participation and increase waiting times at polling places. Many voters do not understand RCV, and few legislators can clearly explain it.
- RCV disenfranchises voters whose candidates are eliminated early. In races with many candidates, votes cast for those receiving the fewest votes are discarded and not counted in later rounds, effectively nullifying those voters' participation.
- RCV forces voters to guess. Voters are asked to rank multiple candidates without knowing who the top contenders will be in subsequent rounds, requiring speculative voting rather than informed choice.
- RCV treats voters unequally. If no candidate receives 50% in the first round, the lowest vote-getter is eliminated, and second-choice votes are redistributed. Voters who supported the leading candidate in the first round do not get an additional vote in later rounds, while others do.
- RCV can result in a less favored candidate winning. Voters whose first-choice candidates are eliminated effectively receive additional influence through second-choice votes, potentially allowing a candidate who was not the first-round leader to win.
- RCV is not a true runoff election. Proponents often refer to it as an "instant runoff," but it is better described as a "blind runoff," because voters make multiple selections without knowing how each round will unfold. If a runoff is desired, it should be a traditional runoff election where all voters vote with full knowledge of the remaining candidates.
- Approval Voting undermines meaningful choice. Allowing voters to select as many candidates as they wish for a single office dilutes voter intent and does not reflect a clear preference.
- RCV complicates vote counting and certification. The process relies on complex algorithms and multiple rounds of calculation, delaying results and reducing transparency. Simple vote counting is easier to understand and inspires greater public confidence.

For these reasons, I respectfully request an Unfavorable Report on HB 580 and urge the committee to preserve clear, fair, and transparent voting methods for Montgomery County voters.

Thank you for your consideration.

Joseph P. Gillin

Silver Spring, MD

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