

Testimony Against HB1289

Honorable Delegates

Please enter an unfavorable decision about HB1289.

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.

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

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