

**Written Testimony submitted to the Ohio State Legislature Senate Committee on General  
Government**

**Senate Bill 137**

**Public Hearing December 12, 2023**

**Gina Swoboda, Executive Director, Voter Reference Foundation**

It is an honor to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 137. Thank you for the opportunity to address ‘Ranked Choice /Instant Run Off Voting.’ My name is Gina Swoboda. I am the Executive Director of the Voter Reference Foundation (VRF), and the Chief Election Policy Officer of Restoration of America. This testimony is presented on behalf of the Voter Reference Foundation.

The goal of the Voter Reference Foundation is to increase voter participation through ensuring transparency and integrity in our elections process. Ranked Choice or Instant Run Off Voting undermines public confidence in results, leads to delays in result reporting, makes it more difficult for election administrators to conduct elections, recounts, and routine post-election audits, and increases voter confusion leading to decreased participation.

Ranked choice or ‘Instant Run Off’ voting is an opaque system that deprives the public of the transparency so desperately needed to help restore confidence.

In the event a jurisdiction was to enact Ranked Choice/Instant Run Off voting, taxpayers would need to fund new equipment/software, sweeping voter education programs and a complete overhaul of poll worker and poll watcher training to ensure all parties understand a process that many election administrators themselves find confusing.

In the Ranked Choice/Instant Run Off model multiple rounds of tabulation are required in races where the first round does not yield a candidate with a majority exceeding 50%, and the elemental unfairness of the concept that the candidate with the most votes is potentially not declared the winner is antithetical to increasing voters’ confidence.

When voters lose confidence, they stop participating. Requiring voters to ‘rank’ every candidate in a contest presumes that voters have the time and resources to research every nominee in every race. New voters, elderly voters, busy voters, all would have their vote held hostage with the threat that their ballot may be ‘exhausted’ which effectively means their vote is thrown away, should they fail to fully rank each race.

SB137 ensures that the wishes of the majority in any contest (majority defined in the truest sense: as every vote cast in a contest, not merely those remaining after ballots are thrown out) is reflected in the results.

Ohio has made great strides in increasing transparency in elections, the Data Act being just one example of important election policy reforms that have increased public confidence. Any implementation of Ranked Choice/Instant Run Off voting would run counter to these efforts and would confuse voters and delay the reporting of results.

As a group whose sole mission is to increase election integrity and transparency and promote voter participation, we most respectfully request that the Ohio Senate support this bill to ensure the voices of Ohio voters continue to be expressed with the time-tested method of one vote for one person. We request the Senate pass SB137, thereby protecting the current elections process, in which no ballot is 'exhausted' for failing to 'rank' every candidate, and where no voter is disenfranchised simply by virtue of being unable to keep up with the amount of research and number of votes required to participate in a new system that can lead to decreases in voter confidence, exhausted voters and thrown out votes.

For follow up questions and more information, I may be reached at [gs@voterreferencefoundation.com](mailto:gs@voterreferencefoundation.com).

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