

February 19, 2024

Zaida Edwards  
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Dear Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the General Government Committee,

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 137. My name is Zaida Edwards. I was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio and have been a resident here my whole life. I studied political science for my major at University, and now work as a project manager and operations business analyst. I strongly opposed the passage of Senate Bill 137.

This Bill was introduced last year with concerns that Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) would disenfranchise the public. I completely agree that the integrity of our elections is of utmost importance and cannot be compromised. The disenfranchisement of voters across the political spectrum is a long-standing issue in our country that RCV aims to solve.

I myself, like many other Americans, have felt disenfranchised with the current “plurality-wins” voting method. While other options exist on the ballot, voting for a candidate apart from the top two contenders is a wasted vote. With RCV, I can vote for my preferred candidate and have my voice heard, without throwing away my vote, if it’s not for a top contender. This allows for both parties to have more flexible platforms to address the needs of all their voters and move the country forward. Without varying opinions, we are caught in a gridlock and the middle is not represented.

Used today in roughly 50 U.S. jurisdictions, across the political spectrum, RCV first began in Ashland, Ohio in 1913. It’s been used for over one hundred years in Australia and in other parts of the world, including New Zealand, Canada, and Ireland. This is a tried and tested system with a body of research to support it.

There are multiple ways to employ RCV, with each jurisdiction selecting a simple method that works best for their voters. Recent election exit poll surveys confirm that RCV is not a complicated system.

In November 2021, after Utah’s first RCV Election, approximately 81% of respondents reported that the RCV election method was either very easy or somewhat easy. In 2017, after only their third RCV Election, the city of Minneapolis surveyed voters and found that 92% thought RCV was simple. In August of 2022, Alaskan election exit poll surveys also reported that 85% found RCV to be “simple”. Of that 85% who said RCV was “simple,” 57% said it was “very simple”. Of these Alaskan respondents 33.8% were registered Republicans, 15.6% were registered Democrats, and the remaining were unaffiliated. While there’s no evidence to show that RCV would favor one political group over another, these surveys help show that, in practice, the simplicity of RCV is something both sides of the aisle can agree on.

RCV is a electoral voting system that can be implemented in many ways. This flexibility means that jurisdictions can select the method that works best for them, while still ensuring “one-person-one vote”. The Ohio Constitution supports this right for each municipality to choose if and how it will use RCV in it’s elections:

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Section 3 of Article XVIII of the Ohio Constitution reads as follows:

Municipalities shall have authority to exercise all powers of local self-government and to adopt and enforce within their limits such local police, sanitary and other similar regulations, as are not in conflict with general laws.

The Ohio Supreme Court also upheld RCV as constitutional in 1923. Ohio's Constitution does not have a Supremacy Clause, therefore, SB 137 would conflict with both Ohio's Constitution and Ohio's Supreme Court Ruling.

Sen. Theresa Gavarone was quoted in an NBC4 article that she's working to give confidence and certainty to voters and that RCV would undermine that. However, as an Ohio voter who cares deeply about our democracy, voting rights, and "one-person-one-vote", I strongly believe that a ban undermining both our state's constitution and Supreme Court ruling is the more concerning threat to our state's government.

I ask you to please consider my testimony and vote NO on this unconstitutional bill.

Thank you again for your time and the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Sincerely,

Zaida Edwards