

Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come before you regarding the topic of Ranked Choice Voting.

My Name is Scot Turner and from 2013 until 2021 I had the honor of serving the people of Georgia's 21st House District in the Georgia General Assembly. For reference, I served a suburban district that was roughly 70-75% Republican at the time. During my time in the House, I enjoyed a great deal of recognition for my conservative voting record, including being recognized 4 times for Conservative Achievement or Conservative Excellence by the American Conservative Union, a 93% lifetime score from Club for Growth, and a 100% score from the National Federation of Independent Business Owners.

[A research paper that was updated in April of 2023](#) that assigned an ideological score to every state legislator in the [country found that I was the 14th most conservative member to serve in the Georgia House of Representatives since 1990.](#)

I tell you all this because I have seen too many critics of Ranked Choice Voting mischaracterize it as a tool of the left. And as an ideological conservative I would encourage you to be more curious about the benefits of RCV rather than move to pass into law a blanket ban.

Also for your background, I am the product of Georgia's runoff election system, which requires the winner to receive 50%+1 of the total votes cast to win. If no candidate achieves that, then the top two must face off in a month-long runoff campaign.

When I was first elected, I ran against 3 others in a special election that happened to take place during the holidays. On election night, I was 122 votes shy of winning a majority of the total votes cast in the first round of that 4 way race. After a bruising runoff campaign, I won 60% of the vote in the runoff, but total turnout in my now head-to-head match up was about equal to my individual vote total in the first round. A massive number of voters did not return for the second round, and my district went a full month of an active legislative session in 2013 without representation.

I remember the very first conversation I had with the Speaker of the House as a Representative-Elect. I had run on tax reform, ethics reform, I wanted to see how technology could make government more efficient. With all of those thoughts about this ambitious legislative agenda floating in my head the Speaker asked me what I wanted to work on, "I want to end runoffs," was my only reply.

Two years later, he assigned me to the House Governmental Affairs Committee, which works on election law, and I dove headfirst into all things that would build voter confidence while making voting more efficient and representative of the will of the people.

At first I was an RCV skeptic. When I first learned of it, I was terrified of the thought that my grandmother would be on TV telling the news that she didn't know she had a second choice. The thought terrified me and informed my biases against RCV at the time.

But I prided myself, as a legislator, for allowing my biases to be challenged with facts and evidence. The first conservative I ever heard make sense about RCV was my friend and colleague, State Rep. Wes Cantrell, who introduced several pieces of legislation to use RCV to shorten or eliminate runoffs in Georgia.

As I have done with every issue I cared deeply about, I went into a deep dive researching the issue of Ranked Choice voting, this time hoping to have my biases confirmed. But they were not. In fact, the evidence was telling me that I was wrong.

The truth is that we all rank our choices all the time. Rocky Road ice cream isn't available? I'll have chocolate. No Coca-Cola products on the menu? I'll have water. No Skyline available? Gold Star will do in a pinch. You get the point. Ranking our choices is a natural human behavior that doesn't take much to understand.

And for us in Georgia, our runoffs are causing some real problems. For one, they are expensive: Kennesaw State University put the cost at \$75M statewide. The drop off in voter participation is huge; we have seen 500,000-700,000 voters not return for the runoff election; those voices forever silenced at the ballot box as their votes are tossed out as if they were never cast.

And so I come to Ohio today to ask politely for you to slow down. Each state that passes bans on ranked choice voting makes it harder for states like Georgia to solve our very real problems. Since there are no real problems with RCV in Ohio, banning it doesn't solve anything here, and it makes it harder to solve problems elsewhere.

And I have heard just about every argument there is to ban ranked choice voting. In fact I collected the most common ones included in emails from constituents to legislators. What we found after sifting through them was that the arguments against RCV fit neatly, for the most part, into two categories. The first, which is the largest category is made up of demonstrably false claims.

These are the arguments like it is too confusing, or the results cannot be audited. My favorite two, which was a pair on the very same email, falsely claimed that you had to rank all candidates, even the ones you do not like, or they will throw your ballot away. It appeared right next to another false claim that there are too many ballots that become exhausted when a voter doesn't rank all of the candidates. Not only can these two claims not be true simultaneously, the data shows that compared to our runoff system in Georgia, the number of exhausted ballots is exceedingly low. And when a voter chooses not to rank a candidate that captures the voters' intent.

The second, smaller category of arguments against RCV are what I call technically true, but are misleading because they ignore the context of the whole story, leave out important details, or ignore how much worse it can be in a traditional runoff.

One example of this type of argument is the tale of a mayoral race in the city of Burlington, Vermont. I have read where critics of RCV point to a race where the ultimate winner received 29% of the vote in the first round before earning more than 50% in the final round. The claim, and I quote, is, "[that] candidate was declared the winner in the third round, even though he was not the first choice of nearly three-quarters of the voters."

This is not actually an attack on RCV, or Instant Runoffs. It is an attack on runoffs of any type. For example, Geoff Duncan earned under 25% of the first round of his runoff before going on to be our state's Lieutenant Governor. Similarly, Brian Kemp earned roughly 26% before going on to become Governor of Georgia. Both of these elections were part of the same cycle, with both candidates receiving fewer than 29% of the vote before going on to win. The 29% example in Burlington is meant to

intentionally mislead you by leaving out that these types of results can and do happen in any type of runoff system, not just RCV/Instant runoffs.

Before voting for this legislation, I would encourage you to not base your decision only on arguments in the two categories I have mentioned in this testimony, but dig deeper. The bills I have seen introduced in state capitols across the country are largely rooted in the fear that comes from the arguments in those two categories. Please, join me in allowing your biases to be challenged and whatever decision you decide to make, do not let unfounded fear be the driving factor.

I will offer myself as a resource to you if you wish and together we can peel back the layers of fear, uncertainty, and doubt that is cast by those whose agenda is to oppose RCV.

Everywhere RCV is being used, the voters are telling us they like it. That it isn't confusing. And it has value. At a time when we should be looking at RCV to solve specific problems, we should not be banning it.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the great State of Ohio, and by extension, to our country.