

To: Members of the Ohio Senate

Subject: Detailed Opposition to Senate Bill 137 Regarding Ranked Choice Voting

Dear Honorable Members of the Ohio Senate,

My name is Zachary Joseph, and I am proud to serve as a City Council member for the City of Riverside, Ohio.

I am writing to express my vehement opposition to Senate Bill 137, which seeks to prohibit the use of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in local elections across our state.

After a thorough analysis and consideration of modern electoral practices, our city's Charter Review Committee has unequivocally recommended that we place a ballot measure to amend our charter to incorporate Ranked Choice Voting. We firmly believe that this initiative will help to enhance democratic engagement and ensure that our electoral outcomes reflect the true will of the people.

The principle of home rule is fundamental to municipal governance in Ohio, granting cities the power to manage their internal affairs without undue state interference. Mandating a uniform method of voting, as proposed in SB 137, infringes upon this principle, dictating how local elections should be conducted and undermining the autonomy that has long been afforded to municipalities under Ohio law.

Furthermore, the right of voters to decide on their electoral systems is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. It is crucial that such decisions remain in the hands of local electorates rather than being centrally dictated by state legislation. This bill not only strips away this choice but also potentially disenfranchises voters who seek more representative and inclusive voting methods.

Evidence from Other States and Cities

Ranked Choice Voting has been proven effective and beneficial across the United States. For example:

- **Maine:** As the first state to adopt RCV for federal and state elections, Maine has seen a significant reduction in negative campaigning and an increase in voter engagement. Now, elections produce winners who command a majority, reflecting a broader consensus among the electorate.

- **San Francisco, CA:** Since implementing RCV, San Francisco has reported higher voter satisfaction and increased electoral participation, especially among minority groups. The city has witnessed more civil campaigns and a diversification of the candidate pool.

- **Minneapolis, MN:** Studies from Minneapolis have shown that RCV has led to more positive campaigns and less strategic voting, which usually discourages voter participation and skews electoral outcomes.

These examples show how RCV can transform democratic processes by promoting greater civility, reducing electoral costs, and eliminating the "spoiler" effect in races with multiple candidates.

Call to Action

Senate Bill 137 represents a legislative overreach that contradicts the advancements and innovations in voting systems that have proven beneficial in other parts of the country. By restricting municipalities from adopting RCV, the bill not only hampers local self-governance but also disregards the evolving needs and preferences of Ohio's diverse communities.

I urge you, as our state's lawmakers, to oppose SB 137 and support the right of Ohio's municipalities to choose electoral systems like Ranked Choice Voting that promote true democratic principles and enhance the efficacy of our elections.

Thank you for considering this matter with the seriousness it deserves. I look forward to your support in maintaining Ohio's commitment to democratic values and local autonomy.

Respectfully,

Zachary Joseph

Council Member, City of Riverside, Ohio