

Dear Members of the Ohio Senate General Government Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 63, which seeks to prohibit the use of ranked choice voting (RCV) in Ohio and to withhold Local Government Fund distributions from municipalities or chartered counties that choose to implement RCV. I believe that enacting this bill would be a significant step backward for our state's democratic processes and would deprive our citizens of a voting system that offers numerous benefits.

Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting:

1. **Ensures Majority Support:** RCV requires that a candidate obtains a majority of the votes to win, rather than just a simple plurality. This ensures that elected officials have broad support among their constituents, leading to more representative outcomes.
2. **Encourages Civil Campaigning:** Candidates in RCV elections are incentivized to appeal to a wider audience, including supporters of their opponents, to gain second or third-choice votes. This often results in more positive and issue-focused campaigns.
3. **Reduces Wasted Votes:** By allowing voters to rank candidates in order of preference, RCV minimizes the likelihood of "wasted" votes, where a vote for a less popular candidate might not impact the election outcome. This empowers voters to choose their preferred candidates without fear of inadvertently aiding their least favored candidate.
4. **Eliminates the Need for Runoff Elections:** RCV effectively conducts an instant runoff during a single election, saving time and resources associated with holding separate runoff elections. This also helps maintain voter engagement and turnout, which often declines in subsequent runoff elections.
5. **Promotes Diversity and Inclusion:** Research indicates that RCV can lead to more diverse representation. For example, studies have shown that RCV elections have resulted in increased representation for women and candidates of color, fostering a government that more accurately reflects the demographics of its constituents.

National Trends and Success Stories:

RCV has been gaining momentum across the United States. As of December 2023, roughly 50 American voting jurisdictions, including two states, three counties, and 45 cities, have adopted RCV, impacting over 16 million people. States like Maine and Alaska have

successfully implemented RCV for federal elections, and cities such as Portland, Oregon, are preparing to overhaul their government structures to incorporate RCV, aiming to create more representative and effective governance.

Local Autonomy and Innovation:

By prohibiting RCV and penalizing municipalities or chartered counties that choose to implement it, Senate Bill 63 undermines local autonomy. Local governments should have the flexibility to adopt voting systems that best serve their communities' unique needs and preferences. Allowing municipalities to experiment with RCV can lead to innovative solutions that enhance voter engagement and satisfaction.

Conclusion:

In light of the demonstrated benefits of ranked choice voting and the growing national trend toward its adoption, I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 63. Preserving the option for Ohio's municipalities and chartered counties to implement RCV is a crucial step toward fostering a more inclusive, representative, and efficient democratic process in our state.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Michael Estridge

9892 Cedar Knoll Dr, Mason, OH 45040