

Testimony on Senate Bill 63
Senate General Government Committee
By Trevor P. Martin Mar 23, 2025

Dear Chairperson Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the General Government Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 63. My name is Trevor Martin and I am a resident of Columbus. I was born and raised in Ohio and went to school and graduated at Kent State University. In 2005 I moved to San Francisco, California for work. I moved back to Ohio with my wife in 2019. For over a decade I used ranked choice voting. I found it simple, I found it beneficial, and I liked it. As do most folks in San Francisco. In 2018, the last year that I voted in San Francisco, we had the most contentious mayoral race I had ever witnessed and we had more votes cast for that RCV race than statewide nono-RCV races higher up on the ballot. In a 2024 survey of California Bay Area cities, 92% of voters reported understanding RCV well. 70% wanted to keep or expand it.

Are we expected to believe that the people of San Francisco are any more intelligent or capable than the citizens of Ohio? Let me assure you they are not. Ohioans are every bit as capable to both choose who their representatives are and how they are to be elected. This is a bill that tells Ohio voters that they cannot be trusted to know what is best for them. A bill akin to the attempt by this general assembly at raising the threshold of votes needed to pass a citizens initiative in 2023 which the voters rejected. They said No, we *are* capable.

At that time the majority of democrats, if not all in the legislature, were opposed to tha ballot measure. Pointing to outside monied interests that aim to dismantle democracy and the power of the people. Yet these same institutions came into this chamber a couple weeks ago and are praised for their insight and consideration. The Heritage Foundation, the Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP)—officially registered as FGA Action—Florida-based Foundation for Government Accountability, the Honest elections Project—AKA the 85 Fund—with ties to the Federalist Society. This is the company that democrats are keeping when supporting this bill. A bill that seeks to punish jurisdictions that do not wish to vote the way that legislators would like. It seems that democrats would be against this sort of thing, sort of like how they are against withholding needed emergency funds to a state experiencing devastating wildfires just because of their policy decisions. Instead they parrot the half truths and non truths of these Anit-ESG organizations.

Most often the attacks on RCV center around cost and confusion. Opponents of RCV say it costs too much. The study they most often cite is an MIT Election Lab report by Christopher Rhode found that RCV was not the money saver for municipalities that advocates had hoped. Rhode collected election cost data from seven municipal governments that implemented RCV between 2004 and 2011 and from seven control municipalities, he found that RCV cities spend more on elections than non-RCV municipalities. What opponents leave out is that overall election costs during or following RCV implementation were *not* found to be statistically significant. Interestingly, the local governments that adopted RCV were spending significantly

more on elections than matched cities even before they made the switch, and continued to do so during and after the transition. This could be indicative of RCV cities having more political will to invest in their election administration, regardless of voting system.

Any election system needs to design ballots, print ballots, permit voters to mark ballots, process voted ballots, tabulate votes, report unofficial results on election night, and depending on state law, provide an auditable trail. RCV does not fundamentally change these basics. No additional equipment is necessary to conduct an election using RCV, and all election equipment currently on the market likely has the capacity to run RCV elections—so any jurisdiction that plans to replace existing but potentially outdated equipment will gain this capability. A 2023 RCV readiness assessment study by RCV Resource Center found that 83% of Ohio counties have modern, RCV-capable voting equipment, which consists of 76.99% of registered voters in the state.

RCV may at first sound confusing but it is a simple concept to understand and it is popular. Despite claims, RCV is gaining in popularity. Thirty years ago, fewer than 100,000 Americans lived in cities that used RCV. Today, more than 20 million Americans live in communities that have embraced RCV.

- 85% of Alaska voters reported that RCV is “simple” in their first RCV election in 2022.
- In 2022, 56% of Virginia Republicans who used RCV in congressional primaries preferred RCV to single-choice elections.
- 77% of New York City voters said they wanted to keep using RCV after their first use in 2021.
- In 2021, 86% of Utah voters who used RCV were satisfied with their voting experience.
- 61% of Maine voters said they wanted to see RCV maintained or expanded after their first use in 2018. Maine’s legislature then expanded RCV to presidential elections, and its largest city passed RCV for all offices with 81% of the vote.
- 94% of Santa Fe, NM voters were satisfied with their first RCV experience in 2018.
- In 2023, Minnetonka, MN voted to keep using RCV by an even wider margin than when the city voted to adopt it two years earlier – showing that once voters use RCV, they like it even more.

Evidence shows that RCV elections often generate relatively high turnout. For example, when New York City used RCV in its 2021 primaries, that election had its highest turnout in over 30 years. Other evidence finds that RCV increases turnout in municipal elections and RCV boosts youth voter turnout.

Each vote is precious and should count to the full extent possible. RCV yields election outcomes that better represent voter preferences. Winners elected with RCV have majority support and truly represent their communities – meaning a stronger mandate to govern, or stronger nominees in primary elections. Candidates who win a majority in primary elections go on to perform better in general elections. RCV produces more positive campaigning because candidates have an incentive to be voters’ second-choice option. It reduces political polarization, because only candidates with broad support can win. It eliminates the “spoiler

effect,” empowering voters to select third-party candidates without hindering the “lesser of two evils.” It also encourages and allows for more participation from both voters AND candidates.

I urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 63.