

Chairman, members of the committee, I oppose State Senate Bill 63. While other states use constitutional ballot initiatives to let voters decide ranked-choice voting (RCV), SB-63 allows counties and municipalities to adopt RCV—only to face defunding of election activities at the Secretary of State's discretion. By decoupling RCV from state funding, this bill marks the first time Ohio law would permit RCV, potentially paving the way for future legislation to restore funding or expand its use statewide.

First, the legal issue: The 1951 Ohio Supreme Court ruling in *State ex rel. V. Brown* states, "the manner of elections of municipal officials is a feature of local self-government," so long as it's local and doesn't conflict with state law. For 74 years, this has protected local autonomy. By what authority does the legislature now give the Secretary of State sweeping power to withhold funds from counties exercising this right? SB-63 doesn't bend the law—it breaks it, upsetting the state-local balance.

Second, the real fix: If Ohio's Republicans and Democrats want to ban RCV, amend the Ohio Constitution. That's the transparent, democratic way to respect our legal framework. Instead, SB-63 takes a shortcut, using state funds to coerce counties and granting the Secretary of State vague, unchecked power. This isn't reform—it's a power grab.

Local governments deserve better than to see vital funds held hostage by one official's whims. I urge you: vote no on SB-63. Uphold judicial precedent and local self-governance. If banning RCV is the goal, amend the Constitution—don't sidestep 74 years of principle. If the 1951 ruling's tie between "home rule" and local elections is flawed, amend SB-63 to ban RCV for all Ohio elections, with no exemptions (e.g., counties, townships, municipalities). Let the Ohio Supreme Court issue a modern ruling. Either give Ohioans a ballot initiative to choose their voting method or challenge the Court to revisit this 74-year-old precedent. Don't settle for this flawed bill. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Marcell Strbich Lt Col. USAF (ret)