

13 March 2019

Co-chairs Flexer and Fox, Ranking Members Sampson and France and distinguished members of the GAE Committee:

My name is Garrett Sullivan, and I am from East Haven. I am affiliated with Voter Choice CT. I am testifying in support of House Joint Resolution No. 161 which would allow early voting in our state. I also would like to testify in support of Senate Bill 1050, An Act Concerning Ranked Choice Voting.

Allowing voters to cast their ballots before election day will increase voter turnout. Low voter turnout is an enormous concern of mine, and I believe we should be doing everything in our power to improve this problem. Additionally, early voting provides for a more efficient records system within municipal Registrar of Voters offices. Early voting aims to solve these issues facing our state.

I believe that Connecticut must implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) because it is a logically superior election system than what is currently being used. That is, winners in RCV elections have a larger population of support than winners in the current system. Connecticut would be in the company of many states if it were to implement this sound election method. RCV is currently implemented in Maine, as well as various cities in California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Colorado, and Maryland. It has also been adopted in cities in Utah, Oregon, Michigan, and Florida. These municipalities have opted for RCV because it eliminates the need for costly primary and runoff elections. This is because voters are able to vote for more than one candidate in a general election.

Another desirable effect of RCV is fairer and more civil campaigns. A comprehensive Rutgers University poll of voters in 7 cities with ranked choice voting found that voters report friendlier campaigns and that RCV had majority support in all the cities using it. For example, if during a campaign, a candidate resorts to public insult of another candidate from the same party, s/he will be unwise to do so because of the understanding that voters can still vote for him/her as a second choice. In the current system, candidates can run on platforms of cut-throat hostility toward others in their own party, in an effort to sway voters. But since RCV allows voters to vote for multiple candidates, such aggressive politics may not be in the interest of the candidates.

I believe it makes sense to undertake a study of ranked choice voting. I think it's important that the task force includes representatives of the grassroots advocates like myself, along with RCV and election experts. I strongly support S.B. 1050 and House Joint Resolution No. 161, and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the GAE Committee.

Sincerely,  
Garrett Sullivan  
East Haven, CT