**Testimony on HF 983 from council member Evan Brown, City of Red Wing**

At the January 28th meeting of the Red Wing City Council, the council unanimously passed a resolution supporting legislation that would create state standards for units of government that wanted to implement ranked choice voting (RCV). That bill is HF 983. I want to ask you to support this bill.
This local options bill only establishes procedures for implementing RCV in those cities that choose to adopt this voting method, and allows for statutory cities, counties, townships and school districts to make that choice as well. Ranked choice voting has been upheld by the state Supreme Court by both facial and as applied challenges. Polls of the cities that have adopted RCV find that residents are overwhelmingly in support of this method of voting, and find it easy to use.
Red Wing has explored RCV in the past, and the Charter Commission looked deep into this voting method. The decision to consider RCV in Red Wing could not easily move forward because of the lack of state standards for ballot design and voting equipment, related to how we hold our elections on even years. HF 983 would address these issues.
We in Red Wing have seen first hand how the lack of state standards has hindered our local conversation. We want our local conversation to be about the method of voting, and what our residents want, instead of ancillary issues of whether we can design the right ballot or have to rearrange the year of our local elections. These concerns create a barrier for smaller cities such as Red Wing to even consider adopting ranked choice voting.
It makes sense for the state to create standards around this voting method instead of leaving it to be implemented individually by cities. It makes sense to include statutory cities and other units of government. Creating a state standard for RCV elections creates a sense of continuity in election implementation whether a unit of government implements RCV or not.
RCV has cleared legal challenges, has been chosen by citizens in the cities where it has been implemented, and surveys show that residents want to keep it. It widens voter choice and improves the tone of campaigns. In other words, it is a real method of conducting local elections in the state, is proven and popular and, as such, should have state standards for implementation just like first past the gate elections.
HF 983 is not a partisan bill. Our non partisan city council unanimously adopted support for this bill because we have heard from residents through a variety of sources that they care about local elections and how to make them better. I hope you will pass this bill out of the subcommittee on Elections, with bipartisan support, and reach out to your colleagues in the Senate to sponsor a companion bill.
The Red Wing City council has voiced its support for this local options bill. I believe in this bill and would like our city to have a real conversation about our choice of voting method, so that our residents can choose what is right for them. I hope you will see the importance of creating a state wide standard for RCV and support HF 983.

Respectfully,

Evan Brown | Wards 3 & 4
Red Wing City Council
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