

February 20th, 2019
Subcommittee on Elections, MN House
Ranked Choice Voting

To Whom it may concern,

Thank you for discussing the issue of ranked choice voting. I write to you today as a school board member from the city of Bloomington to request that the Bloomington School Board, and other school boards around the state, be afforded the opportunity to consider RCV for school board elections. I know that your subcommittee is discussing the opportunity to allow municipalities to vote on RCV for single seat races such as mayor or city council, but I would like for you to also consider allowing RCV for at-large multi-seat elections as well.

Currently in Bloomington all school board seats are elected at-large without primaries and run in two cycles where there are three seats open for one election and then four seats open for the next election two years later. The problem with this method is that we often have many candidates running which forces voters to split their votes between multiple candidates they may support. For example, two years ago there were 11 candidates who ran for four seats. This is not uncommon for Bloomington. Often when this happens there will be six or seven candidates that are similar and have the support of the majority of the voters, but since voters can only vote for four of them, they must split their votes which hurts all of these candidates. Also what is common in these elections, is there may be one candidate who does not have the support of the majority, but their voters only vote for that one candidate which increases their likelihood of winning. This is a strategy known as "bullet voting" and potentially has the consequence of electing candidates who the majority of the voters are against and are only supported by a minority of the electorate. It is incredibly undemocratic and does not represent the will of the voters. This is how we get candidates elected who may only receive 9% or 10% of the vote.

With RCV the voter would be able to vote for more candidates than there are seats, so they would not have to split their votes, only simply rank their choices. There would also be a minimum threshold that each candidate would have to meet to be elected. This method would lessen the power of bullet voting and help ensure that the will of the electorate is reflected in the outcome of the election.

Again, thank you for taking up the issue of RCV and thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like to discuss this further or would like for me to testify in front of your subcommittee, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Tom Bennett
Bloomington School Board
tbennett@isd271.org
612-991-6260