

# Testimony to the Minnesota Senate Elections Committee

Testimony to State Senate Elections Committee

Re: SF 48 relating to a Constitutional Amendment for Free, Fair, and Equal Elections

From: Jeanne Massey

January 26, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Carlson and members of the Committee. Thank you for your service on the Elections Committee. My name is Jeanne Massey, and I am Executive Director of FairVote Minnesota, a statewide nonpartisan organization that promotes electoral systems that are fair, free, competitive, inclusive, representative of all voters, and responsive to their needs.

I am here before you as an advocate to protect and strengthen our democracy. Most of you know me as an advocate for Ranked Choice Voting, a reform cited by national experts as one of the top reforms to strengthen our democracy, and a topic I hope to be addressing in this committee soon. Today I come to you with a similar goal, to deepen our state's commitment to a democracy that works for all Minnesota voters.

Just as we wish to enshrine equal rights for women, we must enshrine the right to free, fair, and equal elections for all Minnesota voters. There is no more important guarantee in a constitutional democracy.

The Minnesota constitution is surprisingly silent on elections and leaves our state vulnerable to attacks on our electoral institutions. As the violent attack on our nation's capitol on January 6, 2021 showed, there are those who want to deny electoral outcomes and dismantle our system of democratic procedures, and unfortunately, these efforts are only accelerating. As we speak, the U.S. Supreme Court is considering a case that would give state legislatures broad authority to draw gerrymandered electoral maps, deny voting rights, and potentially declare election results themselves.

I want to underscore that we are in uncharted territory, and the danger to our democracy is real. Multiple members of armed militant groups have been convicted of seditious conspiracy, and high level officials on the federal and state level had multiple and active efforts to overturn the

vote of the people. If the Supreme Court rules that only state legislatures have the power over our elections, that danger becomes an ongoing threat. There have not been sufficient efforts to take action against these threats to our democracy, and this constitutional amendment, along with other democracy reforms, are urgent and necessary.

The best way to protect Minnesota from the dangers of this potentially dangerous decision and from future state legislatures denying basic voting rights is to ensure the basic principle of fair, free, and equal elections in our state constitution. And, importantly, constitutionally prohibit civil or military interference in our elections, as we saw happen in our nation's capitol two years ago.

I urge you to support this measure to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot and give voters the power to decide on the right for fair, free, and equal elections for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue.