

March 8, 2023

Common Cause MN is a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to create open, honest, and accountable government, more information about our work at www.commoncause.org.

Thank you, Sen. Morrison, for moving SF2270, a very important election reform.

Minnesota is home to over 18,000 multipartisan members across the state and despite belonging to various MN party affiliations, or not being affiliated, the one thing they've come together to do is support our work ensuring our Republic's democracy is safeguarded, our elections continue to reflect the will of Minnesotans and everyone's vote counts.

We believe democracy is how a free society resolves its differences. And to do that well, we must all agree the process is fair, produces equitable outcomes, and reflects our communities, our values, and our priorities. Nobody wins all the time, but if the process is fair, at least we can trust it.

SF2270 delete all amendment proposes the creation of a task force consisting of approximately 26 to 28 members to engage election officials and recommend statewide standards for ranked choice voting tabulation and reporting processes as well as a timetable for implementation in federal and state elections. It also provides for authorization for local adoptions after July 1, 2024.

The Delete All amendment was posted after 4:30 pm early this evening leaving little time to get the notification, review and assess specific changes among the two and submit well informed testimony.

Ranked choice voting puts Minnesota voters in charge. They can vote for the candidate they want to see win, without fear that will help elect the candidate they like least, regardless of where their top pick stands in the polls. In addition to empowering your constituents to select the candidates they believe in, rather than to make the safest bet, this enables new voices to rise in positions of public office. Common Cause has supported RCV in New York, Oregon and California. We are excited to see SF2270 before the Committee for consideration and work.

Currently, we ask members of the committee, and Sen. Morrison to reconsider the following:

- The idea of the task force is a good one. However, given the size and how politically heavy it is, the work dynamics may be a challenge.
- Ensuring more parity in power dynamics among political members and non-political members, particularly those representing impacted communities.
- Increasing representation from impacted communities and less from those not directly affected such as union representation.
- There is no language regarding how voting happens, and consensus reached. Given the politically heavy composition of the body there is added risk of lack of parity in power dynamics. This works against the intent of creating a diverse and representative body.
- It doesn't address per diems for task force members. Participation may be cost prohibitive for some who are from impacted communities.

- **The DE removes the requirement that meetings be open to the public.** Some questions come to mind - how will the public provide input? Is this a closed body? If so, then the composition of the members making decisions should be more reflective of impacted communities and those the reform is proposing are at the core of why ranked choice voting increases greater represented diversity.
- Under lines 22.15-22.17 it also exempts the office of the secretary of state from disclosure through application of Chapter 14, including Minnesota Statutes, section 14.386. This is also the case under lines Some of these deal with increasing public access to governmental information, increasing public participation in the formulation of administrative rules and to increase the fairness of agencies in their conduct of contested case proceedings. This, in addition to removing the provision that made this task force meetings public, it provides less transparency instead of increasing it.
- The DE removes the entire section dealing with a tie between two or more continuing candidates. Lines 10.17 - 10.22, and lines 12.9-12.12 of the original bill. Nothing addresses this scenario that I could see in the DE.

Key factors we consider when assessing proposed RCV reforms from the administrative process side are 1) Equipment, 2) Outreach, 3) Audits and 4) Budget. Other things we also look for is:

- whether there is equitable representation that is meaningful in the composition of who is making the decisions,
- whether there is parity in power among those decision makers,
- are members mentioned relevant to the process and/or matter they are leading; do they have special knowledge.
- whether the process maximizes opportunity for transparent, and
- does the public have access to information, voting and other relevant information.
- does the public get to interact with the task force or participate in a public and open process or is it a closed body.

We are looking forward to working with Sen. Morrison in gaining a better understanding of SF2270's task force structure and discussing the provisions we've bulleted out above.

Common Cause is grateful to our democracy partners, FairVoteMN, who have tirelessly championed this work biennium after biennium. It is an exciting time for pro-democracy reforms in Minnesota.

Thank you for your dedication to all Minnesotans as you work in committee.

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