

## Testimony before the Minnesota Senate Elections Committee relating to SF 2270: Ranked Choice Voting

By Red Wing City Council Member Becky Norton

March 9, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Carlson and members of the Committee. Thank you for your service on the Elections Committee. I'm Becky Norton and am a member of the Red Wing City Council.

Minnesota has almost a 20-year history with Ranked Choice Voting, starting in 2004 when the nonpartisan League of Women Voters Minnesota completed an exhaustive, two-year study of voting systems and reached a consensus that endorsed Ranked Choice Voting as an option for local and state elections.

The popularity and momentum for Ranked Choice Voting continues to grow across the country in states, counties and cities including five Minnesota cities: Bloomington, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, and St. Paul.

Red Wing has long wanted to have the conversation around ranked choice voting. In 2019 our city council passed a resolution in support of the RCV local options that would remove the barriers to RCV which is a part of the current bill, SF 2270. With all these barriers in place our community can't even have a dialogue about RCV.

All cities should have the opportunity to decide what system is best for their local elections; that's key to both local control and a thriving local democracy.

Ranked Choice Voting is a tried and tested election reform in our state, with nearly 20 percent of Minnesota voters already using this method of voting with great success. Importantly, RCV has been shown to open the door for more voices, foster greater diversity, incentivize civility, and improve voter turnout. And voters find it easy to use.

We are eager to **consider** RCV for Red Wing elections, and I am personally excited that the current bill not only allows local jurisdictions the opportunity to adopt RCV, but will ultimately enact RCV for state and federal elections as well.

What is good for our local communities is good for our state. RCV offers me and my neighbors the opportunity to vote for our preferred candidate without the fear we are "throwing our vote away." This simple act **upholds the promise of a democracy** and is more reflective of all Minnesotan voices. For too long we have been held hostage by the current method. Isn't voting, isn't democracy about being heard? About voting your values!

More importantly, we want to have this conversation at the local level so our residents can have an honest conversation about what RCV might look like in Red Wing. And that's exactly what the Protect and Advance Democracy Act, SF 2270, provides. I urge you to pass this measure.

Thank you for your time and your service.