

To: Chair James Carlson and Members of the Senate Elections Committee  
From: Maureen K. Reed, Chair of FairVoteMn Board  
Date: March 8, 2023  
RE: Ranked Choice Voting Bill SF2270

Dear Sen. Carlson and Members of the Committee,

In my responsibilities as chair of the FairVoteMn board, I have the enormous benefit of traveling the far reaches of Minnesota to discuss Ranked Choice Voting with community groups, local elected officials and media outlets. The miles rack

up: Slayton. Alexandria. Bemidji. Luverne. Mankato. Staples. Tower. Stillwater. St Peter. Brainerd. If you don't see your area on this list, rest assured I'm coming soon.

Growing up as I did in Redwood Falls, rural Minnesota is as familiar and comfortable to me as my own backyard in Grant. Uniformly and without exception, people across Minnesota are curious about RCV. They are thirsty for information. They have a gnawing angst that their democracy is falling apart. They long for solutions to problems they see everywhere they look:

- Why did our regional economic plan for the post-high school education of our youth fall on the sword of partisanship in St Paul?
- Why are the trusted neighbors who have run our local elections for years now being physically threatened by extremist voices?
- Do I really want my daughter-in-law to run for our school board and the family subjected to personal attacks?
- With health care far too expensive, why can't elected officials cooperate to enact common sense changes?
- Why is our primary voter turnout so low when such important elections are at stake?
- Must I be assaulted every two years by vicious partisan TV ads and grainy handouts in my mailbox?

In discussing RCV with folks everywhere, people quickly understand that it is our conventional method of electing officials which undergirds the bitterness, the acrimony, and the gridlock we all experience. When they hear about RCV, they immediately perceive how it would focus attention on issues, not on personalities. They are energized with the idea they would have more choice. They are heartened that, as voters, they would have a louder voice. And they are relieved there is an antidote to the extremism that is rising and lapping at their boots.

Some folks see local RCV as an option they would consider for their own communities. But because many more of them see state partisanship as the bigger problem, a far larger number see statewide RCV as the firm path to better outcomes. They ask in bewilderment, "Why have we not heard about this until now?" And, "How soon can this happen?"

Minnesotans are not naive. They know RCV cannot fix everything. They know differences of opinion will always exist, but they want to experience a better way of finding common ground, a way that lifts us instead of degrades us.

In this testimony, I initially focused on what I hear from others. But let me finish with a personal story. I practiced internal medicine in St Paul for many years. Later as medical director at HealthPartners I became more involved in health policy. When serving on the Governor's Health Care Task Force in 2008, it was obvious to me that committed people of diverse perspectives could arrive at cogent solutions. Despite a robust bipartisan plan, however, the resultant action was lackluster. "What if," I asked myself, "elected officials were emancipated from narrow special interests and beholden to their voting constituents – and a wider constituency at that?"

I still ask that question. Whether the issue is health care spending, education funding, or water quality, we all are held hostage by a current voting method that guarantees gridlock and enables extremism. People across Minnesota see that a change is needed – and soon. I ask you to vote for SF2270, allow jurisdictions to opt for RCV, and implement RCV for statewide offices in 2026. Or sooner.

Thank you for working on behalf of all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,  
Maureen K. Reed, M.D.  
Chair, FairVoteMn Board