

Honorable Members of the Minnesota Senate Elections Committee  
Room 1200 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
95 University Ave. W.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Testimony on SF 1636 Elections Budget Omnibus Bill in favor of Ranked Choice Voting Local Option, and against the adoption of A24 Amendment

Honorable Members,

I am Evan Brown, a city council member in the city of Red Wing. I urge you to maintain local options for ranked choice voting as originally written in the Elections Budget Omnibus Bill. I believe the amendment undermines implementing ranked choice voting for local units of government.

While I am speaking as an individual member of our city council, 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 unamended omnibus bill. From first hand experience in exploring whether to have a local referendum on ranked choice voting in Red Wing, it became clear that state statute regarding ballot design in multi race elections, or even year elections, made it impossible to even consider that voting method.

I was and continue to be an advocate for local options provisions in state statute so that there are clear and consistent rules for all cities and school districts. The current state of affairs in statute makes ranked choice voting unlike any other part of the statutes governing elections, in that there are no rules that can guide cities and school districts in the proper implementation of ranked choice voting. Further, there are other statutes that prevent the use of ranked choice voting in even year elections, like ballot design I mentioned above, and elections equipment questions, that make ranked choice voting unclear for cities to even discuss. This ambiguity is in itself unlike the rest of the rules governing elections.

Ranked choice voting has been found constitutional by the State Supreme Court. It has a nearly 20 year history in the state with Minneapolis voters approving the move to this system in 2006. It seems time to make sure there is clarity from the state so that all cities and school districts operate under the same parameters for setting ranked choice voting elections should those local jurisdictions decide that ranked choice voting is right for them.

By setting clear rules in statute, we make it clearer for all involved to understand and use ranked choice voting. I believe it makes sense to know that if I go to another city with ranked choice voting, that my experience as a voter will be the same as it was in my previous city. That is the expectation we have in moving from city to city in the state, that even though the organization of local races might shift around, that in general we know what to expect from the ballot. Ranked choice voting should be no different.

I hope you will retain the original language regarding local options for ranked choice voting. I think the rules are clear, and based on the evidence of the multiple successful ranked choice voting elections at the municipal level in our state since 2009.

I thank you very much for your time in reading this.

Respectfully,

Evan Brown | Wards 3 & 4  
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