

March 8, 2023

Greetings Minnesota House & Senators members,

Thank you for this opportunity to share my written testimony with you.

My name is Zaylore Stout, I live in North Minneapolis. I'm an attorney running my own law firm. I am both an LGBTQ+ and Black History historian. My first book *Our Gay History in Fifty States* was published in 2020 and my second book *Our Black History in Fifty States* is slated for publication next year. I serve on the board for Fair Vote Minnesota as Treasurer and Vice-President of Quorum, the Twin Cities LGBTQ+ and Allied Chamber of Commerce. I ran for city council in St. Louis Park in 2017 and previously served on the city's Human Rights Commission.

Today, I ask that we all consider our history as you review whether or not to move this bill forward and when. Our electoral process has and continues to evolve since our country's founding.

- The 15th amendment in 1870 granting Black men the right to vote.
- The 19th amendment in 1920 granting women the right to vote.
- The 26th amendment in 1971 lowering the voting age to 18.
- We've needed the 1965 and 1975 Voting Rights Acts to bolster these prior amendments.

All of these efforts started at the grass roots... and the grass roots is within the states.

It saddens me that as part of the first generation to live in this country after the abolition of segregation we are still fighting some of these same fights my ancestors thought were won over 45 years ago.

Do you know what countries like Turkey, South Korea, Italy, and Colombia all have in common? They all have higher voter turnout than we do. We can do better and must do better. Especially if we want to remain, at least in our eyes, that shining city on the hill.

We need bold change now!

RCV is part of that evolution.

I implore you to support this bill and move it out of committee to the floor for a vote.

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, 'The time is always right to do what is right. and that time is RIGHT NOW.'

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