

Letter of Testimony for Minneapolis Council Member Andrea Jenkins Senate Elections Committee Hearing Feb. 22, 2024

Members of the Senate Elections Committee,

In 2017, I made history as the first African American openly trans woman to be elected to office in the United States. Ranked choice voting (RCV) was a critical part of my success to my re-election in 2023.

RCV gives greater opportunity to underrepresented communities by opening the process to more candidates and new voices, incentivizing positive campaigns based on the issues, eliminating the risk of vote-splitting between candidates with similar platforms or from the same community, and promoting candidates more reflective of and responsive to the majority.

In our current system, the candidate with the most votes wins, even if they only have a small percentage of the vote. In contrast, RCV requires the winning candidate to earn a majority and encourages all candidates to campaign to that majority—by reaching out beyond their base and building broad coalitions of voter support that span differences in background and political ideology.

This requirement to build a broad majority coalition was crucial to my re-election in 2023. I needed to actively seek out and connect with voters outside of my base and broaden my appeal. I accomplished this by focusing on the issues that mattered to voters in my district and finding common ground with those voters; I said, “Even if you vote for candidate X as your first choice, I hope you will consider me for your second choice.”

Since candidates in ranked-choice elections must appeal beyond their own supporters to the supporters of their opponents, negative campaigning is not only ineffective under RCV, it can backfire. This can create a more positive and collaborative political climate, focused on the issues, rather than ad hominem attacks where historically marginalized groups are frequent targets.

Moreover, by eliminating the local primary and asking voters to show up at the polls only once, RCV simplifies the process, especially for older voters and others with barriers getting to the polls, and saves time and money for cities.

With RCV, first implemented in 2009, the Minneapolis City Council has steadily become more diverse and reflective of the diverse array of communities, ethnicities and backgrounds we represent in the city.

RCV has worked well in Minneapolis. Our city elections officials are some of the best in the state, indeed the country, and I have seen them implement RCV with the utmost care, transparency and integrity. I could not be prouder of the RCV system in Minneapolis, and I hope other cities and local jurisdictions are given the power to try it for themselves.

RCV levels the playing field to allow new voices to emerge and gives candidates with the best ideas and the broadest coalition the best chance to win. I strongly support RCV and giving more communities the opportunity to use it if they deem it is best for them. I urge you to vote yes on SF 3868 and advance the bill out of committee.

Sincerely,



Council Member Andrea Jenkins

