

Dear Chair Dziedzic and members of the Committee on State and Local Government and Veterans,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed legislation granting cities the option to implement ranked choice voting for local elections. As a Saint Paul city council member who experienced the transformative power of ranked choice voting firsthand, I am convinced that this reform is essential for fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy in our state.

In 2023, Saint Paul made history by electing an all-woman council majority, with Anika Bowie being one of the remarkable women of color in this historic cohort. Our election was a testament to the diversity and strength of our community, as we navigated a seven-way race of candidates of color. Throughout the campaign, many of my opponents resorted to smear campaigns, attempting to distract voters from the issues at hand. However, thanks to ranked choice voting, I was able to remain positive and focused on our shared values, ultimately earning the trust and support of our constituents.

Ranked choice voting allowed voters to express their preferences without fear of splitting the vote or wasting their vote on a lesser-known candidate. It encouraged candidates to run constructive campaigns based on their vision for our city, rather than engaging in negative tactics aimed at undermining their opponents. The result was a more civil, substantive, and inclusive electoral process that truly reflected the will of the people.

As the lead organizer for the successful Restore the Vote legislation, which restored the voting rights of over 50,000 individuals on probation or parole, I understand the importance of expanding access to the ballot box. Just as Restore the Vote legislation increased voter participation by giving more people a voice in our democracy, allowing cities to adopt ranked choice voting will further enhance voter engagement and strengthen our democratic principles.

I urge you to vote in favor of this legislation to continue our state's proud tradition of leading the charge for a robust and inclusive democracy. By giving cities the option to implement ranked choice voting, we will empower voters, encourage greater civic participation, and ensure that our electoral process reflects the diverse voices and perspectives of all Minnesotans.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and I look forward to your support in advancing this important reform.

Sincerely,

Anika Bowie  
Saint Paul City Council Member