

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
One strong united voice for Minnesota workers

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Senator Jim Carlson, Chair of Senate Elections Committee

Honorable Members of the Senate Elections Committee

Dear Chair Carlson and Honorable Members of the Senate Elections Committee,

AFSCME Council 5 strongly supports SF1071. This bill would allow any local government to use Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in their elections if they so choose. RCV, also known as Instant Runoff, is a system of voting that ensures the winning candidate is actually supported by a majority of the voters, which is the primary goal of a democracy. RCV achieves this goal, in elections where no one receives a majority, by eliminating the last place candidate and reallocating their votes to the remaining candidates through an instant runoff. This process continues until the most popular candidate wins a majority of the votes.

This process eliminates the potential of a spoiler effect, in which a 3rd party candidate takes votes away from the most popular candidate and throws the election to a less popular candidate. This will encourage more candidates to run because they won't worry about being a spoiler. This means more choices for the voters, and more voices in the election. Such a system also discourages negative campaigning because it is more effective to run a positive campaign in a race with multiple candidates.

Currently, only charter cities are allowed to use RCV. Statutory cities and other local units of government (counties and school districts) are not permitted to do so. This bill would treat all local governments and their citizens the same.

Our union, AFSCME Council 5, joins together with labor and community allies to support this bill to allow residents in cities, counties, and school districts across Minnesota to decide if they wish to implement RCV in their local elections. We support this bill to give voters a choice. This bill is democracy at its finest and our union wholeheartedly supports an inclusive, strong, and thriving democracy that is less vitriolic and more collaborative.

Please vote "yes" on this bill to allow local units of government to choose RCV for their local elections.

Sincerely,

Bart Andersen, Interim Executive Director, AFSCME Council 5

Kent Eken, Political Action Director, AFSCME Council 5