

Dear Chair Carlson and the Elections Committee,

My name is Alex Maitheanas, a community organizer, and I am writing to you today to encourage you to pass SF 1071, a bill that allows for ranked choice voting.

Over my 28 years of living in Minnesota, I have lived in Mankato, both of the Twin Cities, and Moorhead. In each of these cities, I lived in them long enough to vote in at least one of their local elections. However, I only ever felt like my vote counted when I voted in Minneapolis, and that was because of ranked choice voting. For once, I had the ability to vote for the people that I believed were the best candidates, not just the one I thought could win. This way, I knew my vote would be counted, because if the candidate I wanted to win did not progress, then another candidate that I wanted to win still could. It was the only election I've voted in where I didn't feel trapped into voting for the "lesser of two evils." Instead, I could pick someone that I genuinely wanted to.

In Moorhead, this has been a problem particularly in Ward 1. In the past decade or so, Ward 1 has run multiple people that align with a certain set of beliefs, but only one from another set of beliefs. Through my conversations with community, I have strong reason to believe that when there have been three or more candidates, we end up with the one person that represents the less popular belief set- not because that's what we want, but because the vote gets spilt. Our community has had a hard time deciding between the candidates that align more closely with our values, but most of the time, we'd be okay with either candidate that represents those values winning. But our votes don't get to reflect that in our current voting system.

Additionally, many Americans and Minnesotans are disengaged, tired of, and disgusted by the two party system and the ability to only vote for one of two candidates. By instituting ranked choice voting, this can create temporary jobs where people explain how the new voting process works, re-engage Minnesotans in the civics process, and give Minnesotans the ability to feel like our votes will actually matter.

Again, I encourage the committee to PASS SF 1071.

Sincerely,

Alex Maitheanas | Moorhead, MN