

Minnesota State Legislature  
Senate Elections Committee  
Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Re: SF 1071

February 12, 2025

Dear Chair Carlson and Members of the Senate Elections Committee,

Thank you for your service and for your review of SF 1071 to allow the use of Ranked Choice Voting in local elections and use of electronic voting systems with a reallocation feature.

I offer my testimony for your consideration from the perspective of a City Council candidate who ran and was elected in an RCV election in the City of Minnetonka in 2023. Because it was an RCV election:

- **The need to run in a costly, low turn-out (3-5%) August primary was eliminated. As a result, RCV has led to more candidate participation and will lower elections costs for the City of Minnetonka.**

Traditionally there have not been a large number of primaries in Minnetonka City Council elections. However, this was because potential candidates often walked away rather than engage in a low-turnout primary that would require substantial investments of candidate time and funds for a low-turnout August primary in which 'more networked' candidates would likely prevail.

A former council member from my ward admitted that he only ran when, on the eve of the primary filing deadline, he saw that a second candidate had not filed to challenge the incumbent. If only two candidates filed for the primary, he knew it would be cancelled and both candidates would automatically advance to the general election. In my opinion, such scenarios were more likely the rule rather than the exception, and thereby discouraged participation in the process. With RCV, this has been eliminated.

RCV eliminated the cost of administering local primaries. While it has required city expenditures to provide voter education on the new system, as time goes on and voters become accustomed to RCV, that amount should continue to decrease.

- **With RCV, election turnout in Minnetonka's local odd-year elections more than doubled within the span of just two election cycles.**

In Ward 3 turnout increased - from 17% in 2019 (without RCV), to nearly 35% in 2023 (with RCV). The numbers in the City as a whole are similar.

- **My view is that this is largely because I (and other candidates) could and did have more civil, positive and nuanced conversations with more Ward neighbors, including those who were hosting signs for the other two candidates.**

Being able to ask for voters' 'second choice' vote gave me the opportunity to discuss my positions and vision for our city and to understand theirs. This led to more nuanced conversations than would have happened otherwise.

RCV also encouraged civility - it doesn't make sense to go negative when asking for a voter's second choice vote. Rather, it led to more positive conversations regarding my positions, background and qualifications - and listening to my neighbors.

- **The process of counting (and in my race, recounting) votes was accomplished efficiently and well by Minnetonka's elections staff.** At the same time, specialized computer software for calculating RCV election results that accommodates reallocation of votes would, of course, be helpful to the process.

A substantial majority of Minnetonka residents voted to adopt (in 2020) and retain (in 2023) RCV. Residents had the right to decide for themselves if RCV is something they wanted because our city is a charter, 'home rule' city. **SF 1071 would allow not just the minority of Minnesota charter cities to make this determination for themselves, but all 854 cities in our state to do the same. I urge the committee to approve and pass it out of committee.**

Thank you again for your consideration. Please note that my testimony reflects my individual experience and opinions and that I do not speak here for the City of Minnetonka. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding this or my testimony above.

With sincere regards,

Paula Ramaley  
Minnetonka, MN