

Testimony relating to SF 1071
Hearing in Senate Elections Committees, 2025

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mark Ritchie and I served as Minnesota's Secretary of State from 2007 until retiring from elected public service in 2015.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important legislative proposal. In my second year as Secretary of State, I chaired a task force to review some of the opportunities and challenges related to the introduction of Instant Run-off Voting, what we now call Ranked Choice Voting, a system of voting that Minneapolis wanted to use for its municipal elections.

I was proud of the work we did 15 years ago, surfacing concerns and challenges, and pleased with the creative approaches and outcome of this task force. As the top election administrator in the State of Minnesota, I had the historic responsibility of administering the first election using Ranked Choice Voting in Minneapolis, and it went very well, with high turnout, as well as transparent and accurate election results.

Today you have in front of you proposed legislation to provide the same opportunity that Minneapolis, St. Paul, Bloomington, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park have had to adopt RCV to all cities, counties, and school districts. This groundbreaking local control legislation would allow local officials and their voters to decide if RCV is the best system for their communities.

While there may be questions about whether we, as best in the nation election administrators, have the skill and resources to implement RCV, I have the great pleasure of answering, yes, with full confidence based on the real-world experience of eight years of working side-by-side with our amazing local and county elections officials. When I am asked, why change anything; aren't our election procedures the best in the country? I always agree that we are the best, but I always say—we must keep getting better and better if we want to remain leaders in both voter access and representation. RCV is one of the best ways to improve voter representation, and I can't think of a better way of expanding it in our state than by giving local jurisdictions the power to decide if it would work well for their local elections.

I share Secretary Simon's pride in Minnesota being number one in elections. I support this legislation because I want to be as proud of the future as I am proud of our past.

Sincerely, Mark Ritchie