Testimony from:
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In SUPPORT of HB 1264, "AN ACT establishing ranked-choice voting for state party primary elections and municipal elections."

January 13, 2022

House Committee on Elections

Chair Griffin, Vice Chair MacDonald and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Matthew Germer, and I conduct research on election reform for the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government across a variety of policy areas, including election reform. This is why House Bill 1264 is of special interest to us.

R Street ardently believes state legislatures should be focused on improving the voting experience for all eligible voters while ensuring trustworthy elections. Ranked-choice voting (RCV) represents a quintessential example of such an improvement.

Under RCV, voters rank their favorite candidates by order of preference. This results in a system where voters gain a greater voice in their government by sending a more complete picture of what kind of candidates they prefer. If they like more than one candidate, they can say so. If they prefer a candidate who is not a frontrunner, they can support them without worrying about voting for a "spoiler." And because the winner must have majority support, a majority of voters will know that they helped contribute to that victory.[1] Put simply, RCV empowers voters.

Moreover, RCV also benefits candidates and campaigns. Elections are often referred to as "the only polls that matter," and RCV functions as a much more valuable "poll" than does a traditional "first-past-the-post" election.[2] Over time, RCV allows voters to communicate more information, and that

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[1] Matthew Germer, "Restoring Losers' Consent: A Necessary Step to Stabilizing Our Democracy," *R Street Policy Study* No. 240, September 2021. https://www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Final-No.-240.pdf.
[2] Diane Francis, "The only poll that matters is the one on U.S. Election day – all other polls are concoctions," *Financial Post*, Sept. 23, 2016.

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information can be used to improve campaigns. The result is a virtuous cycle that gives candidates a more complete understanding of their voters, which will help them to represent their constituents better.

Despite the benefits of RCV, some may worry that voters will be confused by a new voting system. In practice, this concern is misplaced. Our research shows that when handed an RCV ballot, voters know what to do. In fact, voters are highly likely to rank multiple candidates on their ballots, and "voter confusion" is not a problem.[3]

Particularly relevant to House Bill 1264, our research also shows that voters are especially willing to rank candidates in partisan primary elections, where they are much more likely to be supportive of multiple candidates.[4] And while not covered in our research, we expect similar results in local elections for the same reason. Perhaps this is why more than two dozen localities across the country have adopted RCV since 2004.[5]

At the end of the day, RCV empowers voters and ensures that winning candidates have broad support, which is why we encourage this committee to support House Bill 1264.

Thank you for your time,

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https://financialpost.com/diane-francis/diane-francis-the-only-poll-that-matters-is-the-one-on-u-s-election-day-all-other-polls-are-concoctions.
[3] Matthew Germer, "An Analysis of Ranked Choice Voting in Maine," *R Street Shorts* No. 106, September 2021. https://www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Final-Short-106.pdf.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "Data on Ranked Choice Voting," FairVote, last accessed Jan. 12, 2022. https://www.fairvote.org/data_on_rcv#research_snapshot.