



1212 New York Ave. NW
Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-525-5717

Free Markets. Real Solutions.
www.rstreet.org

Testimony from:
Matthew Germer, Elections Fellow, R Street Institute

In SUPPORT of HB 1482, “AN ACT relative to ranked-choice voting.”

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 1482 is important to us.

When it comes to election reform, state legislatures should be focused on improving the voting experience for all eligible voters while ensuring trustworthy elections. House Bill 1482 represents such an improvement by implementing ranked choice voting (RCV) for federal and state elections.

In an RCV election, voters express their preferences by rank-ordering the candidates. Voters answer more than just “who is your favorite candidate?” Rather, they answer “how do you feel about each candidate relative to the others?” The difference between these questions may seem subtle, but the result is substantially more voice for the voter. If voters are comfortable with more than one candidate, they can say so. If they prefer a lesser-known candidate, they can show support without worrying about the “spoiler effect.” And because the RCV vote-tallying system will continue until one candidate reaches majority support, voters have more opportunities to contribute to that victory.¹ In short, RCV empowers voters.

Moreover, RCV also benefits candidates and campaigns over the long term, which in turn benefits voters. Elections are often referred to as “the only polls that matter,” and RCV functions as a far more sophisticated “poll” than a traditional “first-past-the-post” election.² By showing voters’ preferences

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.



1212 New York Ave. NW
Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-525-5717

Free Markets. Real Solutions.
www.rstreet.org

between candidates, RCV allows voters to communicate more information about what policies, messages and temperaments they want to see from candidates and campaigns. That information can be used to improve campaigns and governance as elected officials better understand their constituents.

Although RCV brings many benefits, some may worry that a new voting system will be confusing for voters. Fortunately, RCV is becoming more common across the country, giving researchers like me a chance to explore if, and where, there is confusion. Ultimately, our research shows that voters are not confused by RCV ballots, and instead they are highly likely to take advantage of the rank-ordering features of RCV.³

RCV provides citizens a more effective way to communicate through voting and nudges our democracy in a healthier direction. As a result, we urge the committee to support House Bill 1482.

Thank you for your time,

Matthew Germer
Elections Fellow
R Street Institute
(714) 609-6288
mgermer@rstreet.org

<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>.