



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee On Veterans and Legal Affairs
From: Nathan Davis, Ph.D., Sierra Club Maine
Date: April 21, 2025
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1666: An Act to Include in the Ranked-choice Election Method for General and Special Elections the Offices of Governor, State Senator and State Representative and to Make Other Related Changes**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Committee On Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Nathan Davis, and I write on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy.

Sierra Club's mission is "To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives."¹ Crucially, this mission encompasses not just environmental protection as an end in itself but also the involvement of all of humanity in that act. This motivates our commitment to democracy,² which is much more than a system of government: it is an ethos and a set of behaviors that must be renewed, taught, and practiced, or it will die.

L.D. 1666 would expand Maine's use of ranked choice voting (RCV) to the offices of Governor, State Senator and State Representative. The core arguments in favor of RCV are ably summarized by the advocacy organization FairVote:

"Voters can honestly rank the candidate they like most, without fear that doing so will help the candidate they like least. With more choices, voters have more power. Candidates have an incentive to engage with all voters to earn both first choices and later choices, meaning voters will have a greater chance of being heard and campaigns will reduce personal attacks."³

Opposing arguments center on the perceived complexity, difficulty, and opaqueness of RCV. The advocacy organization Stop RCV summarizes these risks as follows: "Ranked-Choice Voting makes it harder to vote, harder to count the votes, and much harder to ensure a transparent and accountable democratic process."⁴ Happily, these arguments are easily refuted by Maine's experience thus far:

¹ <https://www.sierraclub.org/about-sierra-club>

² <https://www.sierraclub.org/issues/people/democracy>

³ <https://fairvote.app.box.com/s/srd6c8ldpii7j94o9vkdxdac3yjd30>

⁴ <https://stoprcv.com/research/risks-of-ranked-choice-voting>

we've been doing RCV since 2018, and though not everyone loves it, it has proceeded smoothly. Neither voters nor poll workers are overwhelmed, and the Secretary of State's processes are robust and fully auditable.⁵

Currently, Maine uses RCV for some elections, but not all. So while RCV itself is not confusing for voters, this inconsistency in our current process is confusing for voters. For federal offices, Maine uses RCV for primary and general elections, while for state offices, Maine uses RCV for primaries, but not for general elections. L.D. 1666 seeks to remedy that by clarifying definitions so that our state constitution allows for RCV to be implemented as at both levels of elected office in Maine.

RCV is gaining acceptance across the US. The Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center says that 62 jurisdictions in the US, including states, cities, and towns, now use some form of RCV.⁶ As more jurisdictions have adopted RCV, more data has become available on its effects, much more than we can adequately summarize here. Thankfully, the American Bar Association has conducted an extensive recent (March 2025) review of the available research, and we quote from its conclusion:

*"This report found that RCV increases voter turnout and does so among both low and high-socioeconomic voters. There is evidence it decreases negative campaigning and can lead to the election of candidates with a broader base of support, including more moderate candidates. It appears to increase the number of candidates running for office (at least for some time) and may produce more diverse candidate pools, which can improve the representation of the public by elected officials. RCV is associated with increased direct campaign contacts (i.e. mobilization) and more satisfaction with democracy. There is evidence it does not appear to confuse voters, though we need to know more about how people search for information. In these ways and others, RCV may help improve US democracy."*⁷

We strongly support ranked choice voting, and we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 1666.

Sincerely,
Nathan Davis, Ph.D.
Sierra Club Maine
Legislative Team member

⁵ <https://www.maine.gov/sos/elections-voting/ranked-choice-voting-frequently-asked-questions>

⁶ <https://www.rcvresources.org/where-is-rcv-used/>

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https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/election_law/american-democracy/our-work/what-we-know-about-ranked-choice-voting-2025/