

February 3, 2022

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TO: The Committee on State and Local Government
Augusta, Maine

Hearing on LD 859 – “An Act to Allow Municipalities
to Use Ranked Choice Voting in Municipal Elections”

Good morning to the chair, senators, and representatives:

My name is George Simonson. I live in Harpswell and would like to say a few words in support of LD 859.

By now, most of us understand and acknowledge the advantages of ranked choice voting. Thanks to ranked-choice voting, election races with more than two contenders — which have become ever more common — can now be adjudicated fairly and objectively, using simple math, to identify a winner supported by an actual majority of the voters.

We’ve all seen the bizarre, disastrous, and unfair results of old-time non-ranked choice elections when Paul LePage, for example, was twice elected as governor by a mere plurality of the voters even though *61% of Mainers didn’t want him*. That’s not a democracy.

LD 859 helps us spread the advantages of ranked-choice voting to local municipalities by letting them decide for themselves how to elect their government. It does not require them to change their election methods if they don’t want to.

I live in Harpswell, a non-charter town, which means that under the existing laws we cannot switch to ranked choice voting even if we want to. That’s not fair. So I particularly welcome LD 859 for towns like mine.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote LD 859 as “ought to pass.” Democracies grow stronger and better over time by the accumulation of many small steps. LD 859 is one such step in the right direction.

Thank you.

— George Simonson