



Testimony in Opposition to LD 202: “Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Implement Ranked-choice Voting”

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 202.

In 2019, Maine Policy published a [report](#) on ranked-choice voting, analyzing its effects on voting and on the political process through data from 96 RCV elections. Last year, our analysis was incorporated and expanded upon by Dr. Nolan McCarty, the Susan Dod Brown Professor of Politics and Public Affairs, and former associate dean at Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Dr. McCarty found that RCV does not better engage voters. It unnecessarily raises the hurdles to voting, limiting full participation in elections.

Both our analysis, and that of [Dr. McCarty](#) found that on average, 11% of RCV ballots are exhausted--or discarded--by the final round of tabulation. These are voters who showed up to vote, marked a valid ballot, yet their vote is not included in the final tally.

Even as voters are presented with more candidates, a supposed benefit of RCV, the rate of discarded ballots increases. You might think, “well, that’s because people haven’t had enough time to understand and fully utilize RCV,” but Dr. McCarty also found that as electorates experience more RCV elections, they see a higher rate of discarded ballots.

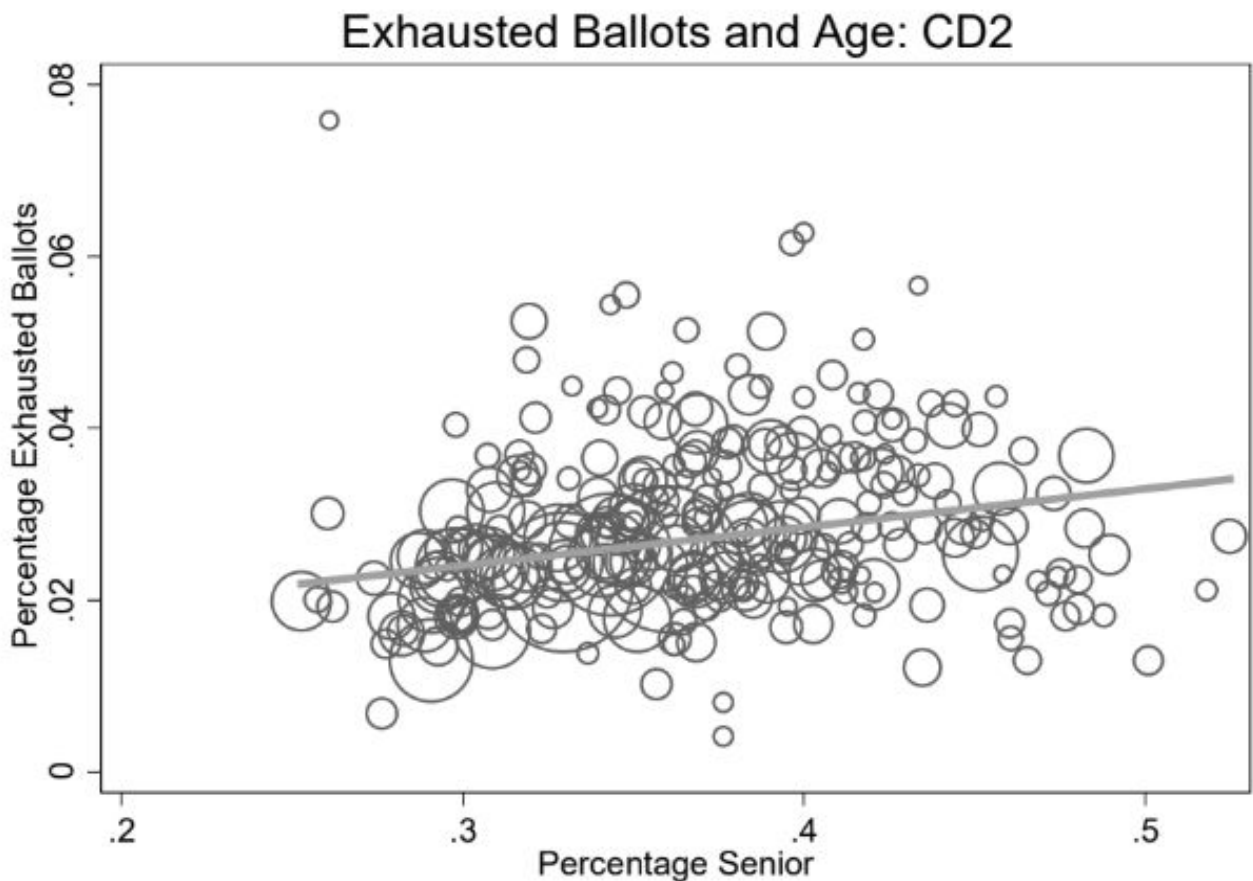
Jason McDaniel, a researcher at San Francisco State, analyzed precinct-level racial group voter turnout rates from five San Francisco mayoral elections between 1995 and 2011. McDaniel [found](#) that the greater complexity of RCV “increases information costs” and that it contributed to “increased disparities in turnout between groups who are more likely to vote and those who are less likely to vote.” The analysis noted that “participation decreased among specific groups of voters after the adoption of [RCV], especially younger voters, African-Americans and those with low levels of education.”

The Princeton report also found that ballot exhaustion was correlated with older and less college-educated electorates (presented by the two figures below).

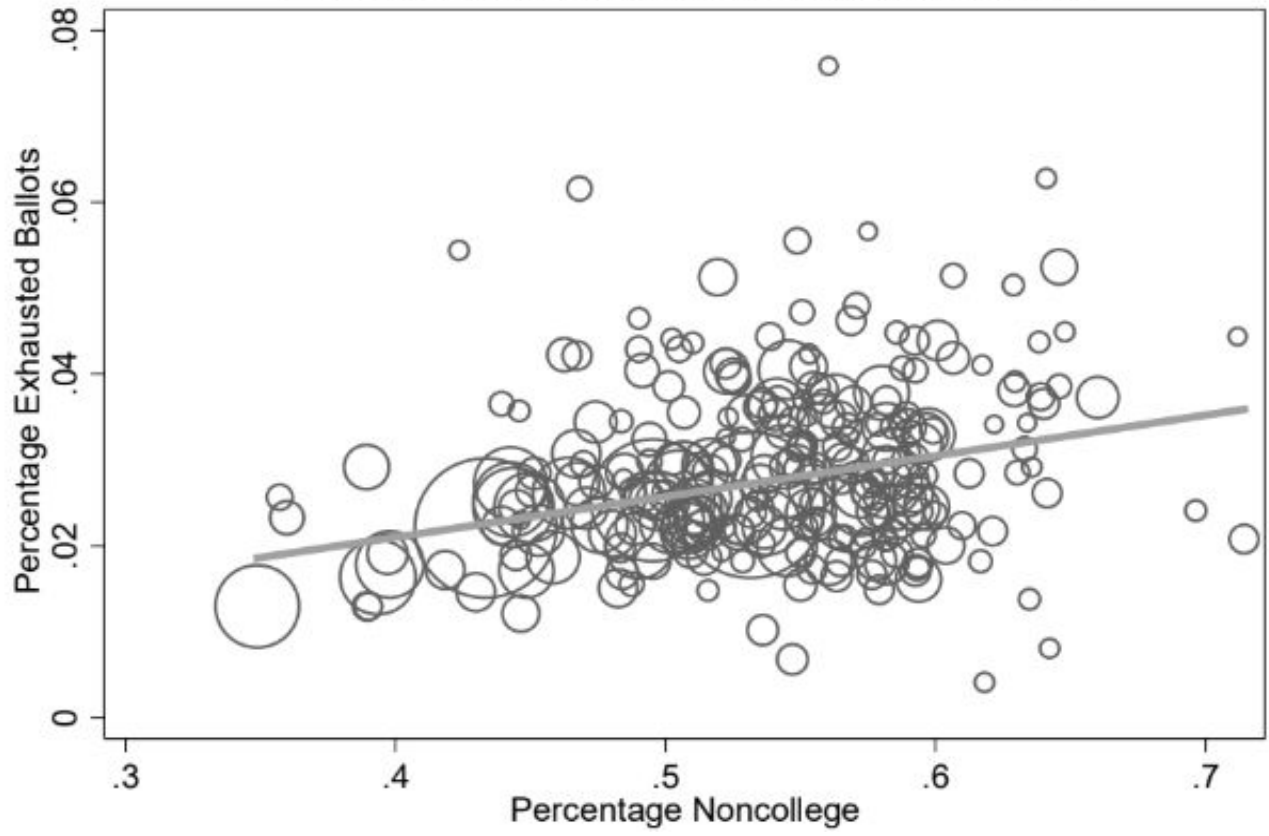
Our perspective on RCV is the result of looking at the data, not of ideology. Across the country, high-profile elected officials of all stripes are deeply skeptical of the claims of RCV proponents: California Governor Gavin Newsom, former California Gov. Jerry Brown, Alaska Senator Mark Begich, and the co-chairs of the New York City Council Black, Latino & Asian Caucus.

In short, RCV is not worth fixing; it is a fundamentally broken system and should be repealed in its entirety. It does not fulfill the basic demands of an effective voting system: a process that is easily understandable, presents a low barrier to participation, and is equally accessible to all.

In order to restore confidence in the administration of Maine elections, and end the unintentional disenfranchisement of certain groups of voters, we urge this committee to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 202.



Exhausted Ballots and Education: CD2



Nick Murray
Maine Policy Institute

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