



Testimony in Support of LD 656:

“An Act to Save Tax Dollars in Maine's Elections by Amending the Laws Governing When a Ranked-choice Voting Count Must Be Conducted”

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 656, which seeks to amend the laws governing when a ranked-choice voting (RCV) count must be conducted, ensuring a more efficient and cost-effective electoral process in Maine.

The Costly Burden of Unnecessary Ranked-Choice Voting Tabulations

Maine taxpayers bear a significant financial burden due to the implementation of ranked-choice voting in elections where it is unnecessary. Under the current system, the Secretary of State includes ballots with invalid or blank first choices in the total for determining if candidates have a majority, which is a decider as to whether RCV runoffs trigger.

LD 656 proposes a commonsense reform: limiting RCV tabulations for races with at least three candidates to exclude blank or invalid first-choice ballots from the total calculation of whether to trigger RCV. This change would have avoided the wholly unnecessary and inappropriate RCV runoff during the 2024 Second Congressional District election, which wasted time,¹ caused confusion and misreporting,² and in no way impacted the outcome of the race.³

Fiscal Responsibility and Efficiency

The administration of RCV requires significant financial resources, including ballot transportation, software, and staff time for tabulation and oversight. These costs are borne by taxpayers and municipalities, many of which operate under tight budget constraints. By conducting RCV counts only when they are needed, LD 656 will:

¹

<https://www.mainepublic.org/politics/2024-11-15/golden-wins-ranked-choice-runoff-in-maines-2nd-congressional-district>

² <https://www.pressherald.com/2024/11/05/all-eyes-on-maines-2nd-district-race-for-congress-2/>

³ <https://www.themainewire.com/2024/11/the-final-maine-cd2-results-golden-will-win-rcv-no-matter-what/>



1. **Save Taxpayer Dollars** – Eliminating unnecessary tabulations will reduce election-related expenses, allowing these funds to be redirected to essential state and local services.
2. **Streamline Election Processes** – Simplifying the ranked-choice voting process will lead to quicker results, reducing delays and administrative burdens on election officials.
3. **Enhance Public Confidence in Elections** – Excessive and unnecessary tabulations create confusion and frustration among voters. Ensuring RCV is only used when truly needed will help restore trust in Maine’s electoral process.

Preserving Electoral Integrity While Reducing Costs

LD 656 strikes a reasonable balance between upholding the principles of ranked-choice voting and safeguarding taxpayer resources. It does not eliminate RCV but ensures its use is appropriate and fiscally responsible. Voters will remain confident that their voices are heard without unnecessary expenditures on redundant counting procedures.

Conclusion

Maine has experienced the costs of RCV for several election cycles now, and the system’s issues have become increasingly obvious. LD 656 is a prudent step toward responsible governance, ensuring Maine’s elections are conducted fairly, efficiently, and cost-effectively.

For these reasons, Maine Policy respectfully urges the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 656. Thank you for your time and consideration.