

Daniel Hester
Hiram
LD 1666

April 22, 2025.

Senator Craig Hickman, Representative Laura Supica, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Daniel Hester, and I am a long-time resident of our Town of Hiram.

I am submitting this letter of testimony to the committee in VERY STRONG SUPPORT of LD 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.

I have long-endavored, working with many others, to enable Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) for elections in Our Great State of Maine, and I have been very gratified to have this most-fair-of-election methods enabled for some state-wide elections since 2016. Most recently in that effort, I gathered pages of signatures in 2020 in support of a referendum to maintain RCV. Maine voters have twice gone to the ballot box in favor of RCV, and their desires should be recognized with the enabling of RCV for all state-wide elections, as proposed by this legislation.

The only reason that RCV is not already in use for the offices listed in LD 1666 is a result of a very questionable interpretation of the Maine Constitution. Our State Supreme Court decided that winning a “majority of the vote” is not in compliance with the need for winning an election by a “plurality,” as our Constitution had been amended to allow.

But nothing in the Constitution prohibits having a law that requires the winner of an election to have earned a majority vote. A majority is still also a plurality, but it is simply a higher bar than winning a plurality of less than 50% of the vote, with the majority of voters expressing their support for other candidates.

Unfortunately, without the use of RCV, many of our elections have allowed candidates to take office without having earned the support of a majority of voters. The elections for Governor of the State of Maine show many unfortunate examples. Consider the 12 elections for governor from 1974 to 2018. In those elections, only three persons became governor by earning a majority of votes from all citizens who submitted ballots:

Joe Brennan earned 62% of the vote in 1982.

Angus King earned 59% of the vote in 1998.

Janet Mills earned 51% of the vote in 2018.

For the other nine elections, each person who became governor received less than 50% of the votes. Surprisingly, the candidate who won his election with the lowest percent of votes during those 45 years was Angus King, who was elected to his first term in 1994 with only 35% of the vote. Also with very low vote counts, Baldacci in 2006 and LePage in 2010 each won with only 38% of the votes.

If we fail to enable RCV for the elections as proposed in LD 1666, we are likely to have many future elections with persons taking office without having earned the support of at least half of the voters.

RCV is also called an “Instant Run-Off Election” because it allows voters to not only select their first choice candidate, but to also select (if available) a second or third choice. If no candidate earns a majority of the votes in the election, a way to work toward having a majority winner would be to eliminate those who received the least votes and have a run-off election for the two highest-plurality candidates. But this run-off would require having an entire second election, adding an immense amount of time and expense. With RCV, the voters have already indicated who they would vote for if their first choice candidate is eliminated. There is no need for another election; all that needs to be done is to eliminate the candidate who earned the least votes, and assign those votes to whoever was already indicated as the voter’s second choice on those ballots. Then the votes are counted again, with no need for an additional election.

For the most fair election system that we can have... a system with no “spoilers” taking votes away from favored candidates, and no voters risking “throwing away their vote” by choosing a third-party candidate that they prefer... we NEED to have RCV.

I strongly urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” for LD 1666.

With sincere thanks for all your time and efforts, and for considering my testimony.

Daniel Hester
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