



Testimony in support of  
H.635/S.420 An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections  
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws  
By Nancy Brumback, LWVMA Legislative Chair  
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts was a supporter of the home rule Constitutional amendment that was adopted in 1966.

In 2005, the League, after a study and consensus of its members, concluded that “Voting systems should be easy to use, administer and understand, encourage high voter turnout, encourage real discussion on issues, promote minority representation, and encourage candidates to run.” The League also said that a voting system “should require the winner to obtain a majority of the votes.”<sup>1</sup> To achieve that majority outcome rather than a candidate winning by a plurality of votes cast, the Massachusetts League supported instant runoff voting, now better known as ranked choice voting (RCV), instead of a runoff election.

Given those two positions, LWVMA strongly supports H.635/S.420 An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections. We feel cities and towns should have the right to determine for themselves how they will conduct elections for municipal officials and boards. And we would support a decision by a city or town to use ranked choice voting in those local elections. It should be noted that Cambridge has used RCV in local elections for some time. This bill would make it simpler for municipalities to try a different form of voting, and it contains a provision allowing municipalities to easily revert back to a former system if they wish to do so.

Our colleagues at the League of Women Voters in Maine, who were instrumental in bringing ranked choice voting to statewide elections for U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in that state and are still working to implement RCV for all state offices, note that RCV has the potential to improve elections by giving voters more meaningful choices, eliminating spoilers and strategic voting, reducing negative campaigning, and reducing the influence of money in politics.

For those reasons, and because LWVMA feels that the winner in a multi-candidate race should receive a majority of the votes, we support this bill to allow municipalities to use ranked choice voting in local elections if they wish to do so. We urge this committee to report this bill favorably.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lwwma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Where-We-Stand.2018.pdf> p. 15.