



Testimony in support of  
H.719 An Act relative to ranked choice voting and  
S.414 An Act to use ranked choice voting in elections  
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws  
By Nancy Brumback, LWVMA Legislative Chair  
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Back in 2005, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts did a study of voting systems. The consensus of League members in the state was 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 concluded 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. We concluded a ranked choice system is preferable to a two-round runoff system in terms of cost and voter participation.

So LWVMA is not a newcomer to the concept of ranked choice voting (RCV), and we urge this joint committee to favorably report H.719 and S.414 and bring this issue to the floor of the legislature. We will also be supporting the ballot question to bring ranked choice voting to Massachusetts. We feel strongly that a winning candidate should receive a majority of the votes in an election and that ranked choice voting provides a way for voters to express their first, second, third and additional choice preferences.

Our colleagues in the League of Women Voters of Maine were a driving force in the adoption of ranked choice voting in that state, which was the first to use RCV for elections for U.S. Senate and Congress in November 2018. Following the first use of RCV in the June 2018 primary election, LWV Maine conducted an online survey to see how voters liked and understood this new election process.

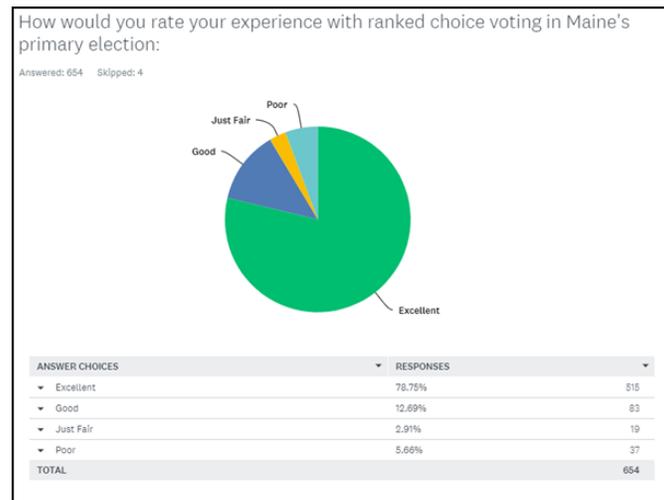
LWV Maine noted: “The informal survey does not purport to represent the views of the population as a whole but provides a useful snapshot of voter attitude coming out of the primary. The results and robust response rate — over 650 participants — reveal broad satisfaction with the use of RCV. Findings include:

- Only 8% of respondents had ever used RCV in a previous election.
- More than 94% of respondents took the opportunity to rank their candidates instead of voting for just one.
- More than 90% of respondents said that their experience using RCV in the primary was either “excellent” or “good.”

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

- Only 4% of respondents said that their voting experience diminished their view of RCV.<sup>2</sup>



In an exit poll after the November 2018 election, the Bangor Daily News found strong public support for a system that assures the winning candidate receives a majority of votes:

“In the same exit poll, voters were asked the following question: ‘The vote counting system used to pick Maine’s governor requires that a candidate win the most votes. Ranked-choice voting requires that a candidate win a majority (50 percent of the votes plus one). How important is it to you that a candidate wins a majority?’ The results show that regardless of party identification, Mainers support the majority-rule. Seventy-three percent of Democrats said requiring the majority-rule was “very important,” and 52 percent of both independents and Republicans agreed. When we include respondents who said that requiring a majority-rule was “somewhat important,” the level of support for the rule amongst Democrats, independents and Republicans rises to 93 percent, 81 percent and 72 percent, respectively. These results reveal that a clear majority of Maine’s voters, regardless of party, support fundamentally what ranked-choice voting does — implements a majority requirement system.”<sup>3</sup>

We agree with the Maine League on these benefits of ranked choice voting:

- ✓ Gives voters more meaningful choices: Ranked choice voting allows candidates from outside the two major parties to compete. It helps create a richer dialogue on the issues and increases the diversity of views available for voters to consider.

<sup>2</sup> <https://rcv.mainelections.org/news/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://bangordailynews.com/2019/03/12/opinion/contributors/what-mainers-really-think-of-ranked-choice-voting/>



- ✓ Eliminates spoilers and strategic voting: Ranked choice voting allows voters to support their favorite candidate without worrying that they might "throw their vote away," or worse, split their votes with like-minded voters and unintentionally help elect the candidate they like the least.
- ✓ Reduces negative campaigning: Candidates running in ranked choice elections must ask for second and, sometimes, third choice rankings. Voters are less likely to rank a candidate highly who is negative toward their preferred candidate.
- ✓ Reduces the influence of money in politics: Campaigns and special interest groups spend a lot of money on negative advertising. By making negative advertising less effective, ranked choice voting reduces the need for, and influence of, money in politics.<sup>4</sup>

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, with 47 local Leagues across the state, urges your favorable action on these bills to bring ranked choice voting to our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lwvme.org/RCV.html>