



Testimony in support of

H.825/S.485 An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections

H.843 An Act ensuring municipal power over whether elections are reformed

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In 2005, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, 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.”¹ 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).

The League was also a strong supporter of the home rule Constitutional amendment that was adopted in 1966.

Given those two positions, LWVMA, representing 47 local Leagues, strongly supports legislation that would allow cities and towns to adopt ranked choice voting for local 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 a version of RCV in local elections for some time.

These bills would make it simpler for municipalities to try a different form of voting, and they contain a provision allowing municipalities to easily revert back to a former system if they wish to do so.

These bills would allow any city or town to adopt ranked choice voting (RCV) for local elections. RCV could be used in elections with both single winning candidates and multiple winning candidates. The bills stipulate how that would happen and what provisions cities and towns would have to decide on to implement RCV.

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.

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



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

Thank you for your consideration.