



Legislation Summary:

An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections

Initial bill number(s): H.711/S.433

Sponsors: Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, Sen. Rebecca Rausch

What the bill does, why LWVMA supports or opposes it, and the League position relative to this bill.

This bill 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 bill stipulates how that would happen and what provisions cities and towns would have to decide on to implement RCV.

The purpose of ranked choice voting is to elect candidates who receive a majority of votes after two or more rounds of vote tallying. Proponents of RCV argue that it avoids candidates being elected who are preferred by less than a majority of voters.

LWVMA VOTING SYSTEMS (2005) GOAL: 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. When electing someone to a single executive office at the state level, such as governor or attorney general, including primary and general elections, the voting system should require the winner to obtain a majority of the votes. The League supports instant runoff voting. Cost and complexity make two-round runoff not acceptable. (Instant runoff voting is now commonly called ranked choice voting.) [Where We Stand](#), p.15

LWVMA has stated as a goal “home rule for Massachusetts cities and towns in local matters.” It noted that: “In the late 1960s, the Special Home Rule Commission recommended legislation to facilitate the use of home rule, but the General Court did not accept any of its proposals. The governor, in 1975, established a home rule committee to explore ways to strengthen implementation of home rule. The committee, on which the League was represented, reviewed the state statutes governing municipal affairs and recommended a number of changes. The Legislature, however, has been reluctant to relinquish its authority in local matters. As a result, a disproportionate number of bills dealt with in the Legislature are so-called home rules bills, i.e. bylaw changes and matters passed by city councils or town meetings. Many of these matters should not have to go before the Legislature.” [Where We Stand](#), pp. 23-24