



**Testimony in support of
H.711/S.433 An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections
By Nancy Brumback, LWVMA Elections and Voting Legislative Specialist
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In 2020, the national League of Women Voters adopted a broad position on voting systems that covers, but is not limited to, ranked-choice voting, advocating for systems which “promote sincere voting over strategic voting and which implement alternatives to plurality voting.”

That position also stipulates: *The LWVUS supports enabling legislation to allow local jurisdictions to explore alternative electoral methods, as well as supporting state election laws allowing for more options at both the state and local levels.*

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts adopted a state position in 2005 that a voting system “should require the winner to obtain a majority of the votes.” To achieve that majority outcome rather than a candidate winning by a plurality of votes cast, the Massachusetts League supports instant runoff voting, now better known as ranked choice voting (RCV).

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

Given those positions, LWVMA, representing 44 local Leagues, strongly supports this legislation that would allow cities and towns to adopt ranked choice voting for local elections without the approval of the legislature. 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.

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. It contains a provision allowing municipalities to 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, note that RCV has the potential to improve elections by giving voters more meaningful choices, eliminating spoilers and strategic voting tactics like bullet-voting, reducing negative campaigning since candidates need to appeal to other candidates’ voters to be a second choice, and reducing the influence of money in politics.

For those reasons, and because LWVMA feels that cities and towns should have the right to adopt their own election procedures without legislative approval, we urge this committee to report favorably this bill to allow municipalities to adopt ranked choice voting in local elections if they wish to do so.

Thank you for your consideration.

The full LWVUS position on voting systems:

LWVUS promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive. We encourage electoral methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible and are expressive of voter choices. Whether for single- or multiple-winner contests, the League supports electoral methods that:

- *Encourage voter participation and voter engagement.*
- *Encourage those with minority opinions to participate, including under-represented communities.*
- *Are verifiable and auditable.*
- *Promote access to voting.*
- *Maximize effective votes/minimize wasted votes.*
- *Promote sincere voting over strategic voting.*
- *Implement alternatives to plurality voting.*
- *Are compatible with acceptable ballot-casting methods, including vote-by-mail.*