

Testimony in support of bills H-7788 and H-7981.

My name is Jacob Vigly, and I am a resident of Pawtucket RI. I'm writing to voice my support of ranked choice voting (RCV).

I have often personally experienced the frustration our current system creates. More than once, I've gone to the polls knowing exactly who best represents my values, voted for someone else anyway. I did this not because I believed in that candidate, but because I was afraid of wasting my vote, or helping the candidate I most opposed. That's not democracy working, and a voice not being heard.

Our current electoral systems often divide communities and discourage involvement in the democratic process forcing people to choose the 'lesser of two evils', rather than allowing voters to express their true preferences. This kind of problem is precisely what RCV is designed to solve. Instead of strategic, fearful voting, RCV lets you rank candidates in order of preference. One person gets one vote, and that vote always counts. In this system, candidates are rewarded for earning broad support rather than just firing up a narrow base.

And this isn't an untested idea. RCV has a track record in American cities going back over a century, and it is already being used with proven success in a wide range of jurisdictions across the country (for instance, Cambridge, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and many other cities, as well as statewide in Maine and Alaska). Rhode Island now has the opportunity to be in the lead on the kind of democratic reform our state and our country so urgently needs. Let's give ourselves the tools to reduce divisions and improve our democratic system to more faithfully represent and involve everyone!

I urge you to pass the two current ranked-choice voting bills H-7788 (for RCV in presidential primaries) and H-7981 (for RCV in municipal elections).

Thank you for your time and work representing Rhode Islanders.