

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing today in support of **House Bill 7981** because I believe it is my duty, as well as yours, to monitor our governmental systems and allow for change when those systems can be improved to better serve the people of our state.

My top reasons in support of allowing municipalities a choice in deciding to use Ranked Choice Voting are as follows: 1) RCV increases voter turnout. 2) RCV saves municipalities money by eliminating costly run-off elections. 3) RCV is more fair and more reflective of the voting district, city or town than our current plurality voting system and 4) RCV encourages more civil political campaigns.

Opponents often say RCV is too complicated for voters. I'd like to share a story with you. I taught 5th grade for 10 years. One year I decided to recycle juice pouches as a class project. At the end of every week, my students collected empty juice pouches from receptacles placed around the school, boxed them up and sent them off to Capri Sun for a return deposit. Capri Sun sent us a check at the end of the year, and we then had to decide where to donate the money. I asked every child to suggest a cause they wanted to support. I had 26 students, and we ended up with somewhere around 6 or 7 donation suggestions. I printed each suggestion on ballots, and each child numbered their choices in order of preference. We then tallied the votes on the white board and began eliminating the lowest vote getters and reassigning the students second, third choices and so on. At the time, I didn't know that what I was doing was tabulating the results in a manner similar to Ranked Choice Voting. My students and I were making it up, just doing what made sense as we went along. We eventually came to find the top 3 winners and mailed out our donations. Some of my students were sad that their top choice wasn't selected, however, there were no tears or protestations because everyone had a choice and a voice in the process. If fifth graders can understand RCV, then public comprehension of RCV is an attainable goal as well.

I'd like to thank Representative Kislak for sponsoring this bill and I'd like to urge the rest of the committee to support **House Bill 7981** giving cities and towns in RI the chance to implement Ranked Choice Voting.

Sherri Simmons

Pawtucket