

Name: Susan Jacobi-Johnson

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Residency: Warwick

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

I am a strong supporter of Ranked Choice Voting. It would enable people to vote for any candidate they prefer (i.e a third-party candidate), without the fear that they would be "wasting their vote" and actually helping their LEAST preferred candidate win. I have been voting for over 50 years, and unfortunately I have been forced many times to vote for candidates from one of the two major parties, because I feared my vote for an alternate candidate would actually result in "the worst person winning". This happened to me in the 80's and I vowed it would never happen again. That is NO way to elect good people at any level of government. It is also why we are stuck with the Two-Party System (which we all hate - but we will not have better and more varied candidates to choose from without RCV). I would love to be able to vote for a third-party candidate, knowing that if they do not win, my vote would be transferred to my next-preferred candidate, instead of essentially helping elect the worst.

Name: Luke Degnan

Email: lukedegnan@gmail.com

Residency: Providence, RI

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Good afternoon, members of the Rhode Island Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Luke Degnan, and I am a resident of Providence, Rhode Island. I am writing to express my strong support for adopting Ranked Choice Voting for Rhode Island's presidential primaries.

My support for Ranked Choice Voting comes in part from my own experience as a voter. In the 2016 election, I felt a strong pressure to vote for Hillary Clinton because I was worried about the outcome of the race. However, the candidate I truly believed in was Bernie Sanders. I remember feeling that I had to choose between voting for the person I thought was the best candidate and voting strategically to influence the final result. That experience made it clear to me that our current voting system often forces voters into difficult choices that don't fully reflect their true preferences.

Ranked Choice Voting offers a simple and practical solution to that problem. With RCV, voters can rank candidates in order of preference. If their first choice cannot win, their vote can still count toward their next preferred candidate. This allows people to vote honestly without worrying that they might accidentally help elect the candidate they least support.

This system is not theoretical. Ranked Choice Voting has been successfully used in places like Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as in states such as Maine and Alaska. In these elections, RCV has helped ensure that winners have broader support among voters and has encouraged more positive campaigning between candidates.

Adopting Ranked Choice Voting for the 2028 presidential primary would give Rhode Island the opportunity to modernize our elections and strengthen voter confidence. It would give voters more freedom to support the candidates they truly believe in while ensuring that election winners reflect the will of a majority.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support the legislation establishing Ranked Choice Voting for Rhode Island's presidential primaries. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Luke Degnan

Name: Paul Klinkman

Email: psychware@yahoo.com

Residency: RI residents for 59 and 32 years, employed by Pawtucket School Department, politically active in RI on this issue

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Dear Committee Members,

The two of us just moved into Southern New England's first available senior housing apartment, which happened to be in Somerset. However, Paul has lived in Rhode Island for 59 years and Liberty for 32 years. Paul still works for the Pawtucket School Department and Liberty still collects signatures for Ocean State Ranked Choice Voting at the Hope Street Farmers Market.

Ranked choice voting has a long history. It has been shown to regularly improve the functioning of governments. It also has a long, constant history of being opposed by deep-pocketed grafters who would rather pay to loot any particular government for its easy money, versus going out in the marketplace with a better product at a better price. I'm perfectly willing to recognize this "flaw" in RCV. However, the vast majority of Americans on both parties object to unlimited campaign spending. The voters also usually object to gerrymandering and various vote suppression schemes.

We can change the way we select the presidents.

The single vote plurality system that we have used in Rhode Island and throughout the US is an outdated system. Its fatal flaw is that in a crowded field, a candidate can win the Rhode Island presidential primary with the support of only a small percentage of voters.

After Buddy Cianci's first felony conviction where he used an on-duty cop to help him torture a man for two hours, he ran for Providence mayor as an independent. He split the vote perfectly in a three-way race, 35% to 35% to 30%, and he won. He most likely wasn't anybody's second choice so he probably wouldn't have won in an RCV election. Then, Operation Plunderdome proved to a judge and jury that Cianci was looting the city again. This time Cianci got 64 months in prison for racketeering conspiracy and the city was left with a terrible credit rating. That's why we need to reduce the chances that potentially extremist candidates can sneak into office with less than 50% of the vote.

I admire the courage of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and others in creating a brand new democratic system out of whole cloth 250 years ago. However, Britain itself and most British colonies have since moved on to more workable democratic systems. So have several other states. Why not us, now?

I ask you to please support Senate bills 2590 and 2951.

Thank you for your time and your public service.

Yours truly,

Paul Klinkman

J. Liberty Goodwin

Name: Jeffrey Smith

Email: jakesmiths5@cox.net

Residency: North Kingstown

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Ranked Choice Voting for RI Presidential Primaries Jeffrey Smith– North Kingstown

My name is Jeffrey Smith, and I live in North Kingstown. Over the past 18 months, through my work with Ocean State Ranked Choice Voting, I've had hundreds of conversations with Rhode Islanders at farmers markets, festivals, and community events. These conversations have shaped my understanding of how people feel about our elections. What stands out most is how many voters feel frustrated, boxed in, or unheard by the current system. And when they learn how Ranked Choice Voting works, the most common response is: "That's so much better—why don't we already do this?"

That personal experience is backed up by data. Research from jurisdictions that use RCV shows several consistent trends:

- Voter satisfaction increases. In a 2021 study of RCV cities, more than 70% of voters reported that RCV was easy to use and gave them more meaningful choices.
- Majority support improves. In traditional plurality elections, winners can—and often do—prevail with less than 50% of the vote. RCV ensures the winner has broad support, which strengthens legitimacy.
- Negative campaigning decreases. Analyses of RCV elections in places like San Francisco and Minneapolis found that voters reported less negativity and more civility, because candidates must appeal beyond their base to earn second and third choice support.
- Representation expands. Cambridge, MA, which has used a ranked system for decades, consistently elects more diverse councils than comparable cities. Minneapolis saw similar gains after adopting RCV.
- Voter engagement rises. Turnout in RCV municipal elections has often increased, particularly among younger voters and communities that historically participate at lower rates.

These findings align with what I've heard from Rhode Islanders: people want more voice, more choice, and a system that encourages candidates to build broader coalitions.

I also want to speak to why this matters right now. Rhode Island is not immune to the polarization affecting the rest of the country. Many voters tell me they feel forced to choose "the least bad option" or vote strategically rather than honestly. Others feel discouraged when crowded primaries produce winners who don't reflect a true majority. These frustrations erode trust in our democratic institutions.

Ranked Choice Voting is not a cure all, but it is a practical, evidence based improvement. It gives voters the freedom to express their full preferences. It encourages candidates to reach beyond their core supporters. And it produces outcomes that better reflect the will of the majority.

The 2028 presidential primary gives Rhode Island a responsible, well timed opportunity to implement RCV. We have years to prepare, educate voters, and evaluate the results. This is a chance to modernize our elections in a thoughtful, measured way.

For these reasons—grounded in both personal experience and data—I respectfully urge you to support H7788 and S2590. These bills would bring Ranked Choice Voting to Rhode Island's presidential primaries and give voters a stronger, more representative voice in choosing our leaders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Name: Errol Danehy

Email: errol.danehy@gmail.com

Residency: East Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

My name is Errol Danehy, and I live in East Providence. I support ranked choice voting (RCV) because—simply put—it enhances democracy. Rather than forcing voters to choose the lesser of two evils (as they often see it) it give a chance to candidates that really reflect what the voters want. It's a clear benefit to voters, without objective drawbacks.

Some may argue that RCV is too complicated, but this insults the intelligence of the voters. Ballots and polling places already contain instructions on how to vote. These could easily be updated with the new rules. In fact, Maine candidate Bruce Poliquin, who lost a 2018 RCV election, endorsed the system, calling it “really easy”.

I feel that the powers that be (the Republican and Democrat parties) benefit from knowing that at least one of their candidates will win, and thus oppose RCV. However, the current turmoil in this country shows that the status quo is failing. I urge Rhode Island's lawmakers to try something bold and enact ranked choice voting. At worst, it is a mistake and can be repealed. But at best, democracy will flourish in Rhode Island and we will all benefit from our voices being heard.

Name: Nicholas Helldorfer Cicchinelli

Email: nhccivi+rcv@mailbox.org

Residency: Pawtucket N/A

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Hello,

My name is Nicholas Helldorfer Cicchinelli. I am a resident of Pawtucket, Rhode Island and I am writing in my capacity as a private citizen to express my strong support for bills S2590 and S2951.

Ranked-choice voting has been demonstrably proven to help elect consensus candidates and prevent “wasted” votes. Ranked-choice voting is also associated with increases in voter turnout, reduced inequities, and improved representation for women and people of color. Polls consistently show that the vast majority of voters – over 90% – of all demographics find ranked-choice voting easy to understand.

According to FairVote research, nearly 10,000 Rhode Islanders cast “zombie votes” – votes for candidates who dropped out between when they turned in their mail ballots and the day of the primary – in the 2016 and 2020 presidential primaries, in addition to a similar situation in the 2023 CD-1 special primary. With ranked-choice voting, voters whose first-choice candidate drops out or is otherwise eliminated have their votes counted for their next choices instead of thrown out, ensuring they are still included in the political process.

The timing of these bills is also important: both major parties will have competitive, wide-open presidential primary fields in 2028. Furthermore, the presidential primary will be conducted on its own ballot, allowing for a critical trial period before final implementation.

I urge you to support bills S2590 and S2951.

Respectfully,

Nicholas Helldorfer Cicchinelli

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Name: Alexandra Curtis

Email: alliecurtisri@gmail.com

Residency: Cranston

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

To the Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Alexandra Curtis, and I am a U.S. Army veteran from Cranston. As someone who took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, I believe deeply in fairness, representation, and the voice of the people. That is why I support the bills that would bring ranked choice voting to Rhode Island's 2028 presidential primary and allow municipalities to use it locally, and why I oppose the bill that would ban ranked choice voting in our state.

During my service, I worked alongside Americans from every background and political point of view. We succeeded by working toward a common goal, even when we disagreed. Our strength as a nation lies in that diversity, and our democracy should reflect it.

Ranked choice voting gives voters a more honest and meaningful say. It allows people to support the candidate they truly believe in without fear that their vote will be wasted. In crowded elections, especially presidential primaries, that matters. No voter should feel forced into choosing the "lesser of two evils" just to guard against a spoiler effect.

RCV also encourages candidates to appeal to a broader base and build trust beyond their most loyal supporters. That leads to more respectful campaigns, broader coalitions, and winners with stronger support. Those are values that matter in public service and in a healthy democracy.

I also strongly support giving Rhode Island communities the freedom to adopt RCV locally if they choose. Local voters should be able to decide how to improve their own elections. A statewide ban would do the opposite. It would take choice away from Rhode Islanders and block communities from pursuing a reform that can make elections more inclusive and representative.

As a veteran, I know every person's contribution matters. Our election system should honor that same principle. Ranked choice voting is a practical step toward a more representative democracy where every voter has a stronger voice.

I respectfully urge you to advance the pro-RCV bills and reject any effort to ban ranked choice voting in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alexandra Curtis

U.S. Army Veteran

Cranston, Rhode Island

Name: Emily Zall

Email: zall.emily@gmail.com

Residency: Cranston

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Hi, my name is Emily Zall and I am a homeowner and voter in Cranston.

I am in favor of Ranked Choice Voting because it allows voting based on who we truly think would be the best candidate without having to worry about “wasting” a vote. It can also encourage more candidates to run because it reduces worries about “taking away votes” from another candidate and thus “giving” the election to a candidate they are opposed to. Ranked Choice voting better represents the will of the voters and that is the core of democracy.

I previously lived in Cambridge, MA and Somerville, MA and was glad to be able to use ranked choice voting there. I volunteered on the MA Ranked choice voting ballot measure when I lived there and was disappointed that it did not pass.

Please support bills S2590 (RCV in Presidential Primaries starting 2028) and S2951 (RCV in municipal elections).

Name: Ray Mathieu

Email: ray.m.mathieu@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

I'm a big fan of Ranked Choice Voting, but I would prefer to see it used in a combined primary including all the candidates: Rs, Ds, Independents, Bullmoose, etc. for an office, with the 2 candidates, regardless of party, getting the most points (in your example of 6 candidates: 1st choice gets 5 pts, 2nd choice gets 4 pts, etc., 6th choice gets 0 pts) moving to the General Election.

Name: joe conti

Email: jconti123@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Please implement open primaries and ranked choice voting. I think these 2 reforms are key to encouraging better candidates to run for office and reflecting the voters voices at the ballot box.

Name: Isaac Lapidés

Email: izac20@gmail.com

Residency: Pawtucket

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

I want to vote for options without feeling like I am voting for a spoiler candidate. Many feel gridlocked by the two party system, this improves our democracy.

Name: Ryan Joy

Email: joyrh22@gmail.com

Residency: Woonsocket

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

I am writing in regards to bills and S2951. Both of these bills help Rhode Island establish a ranked choice voting system. I support both of these bills and I hope you all will agree.

Ranked choice voting has a number of benefits that promote a healthy democracy. One of the benefits is it ensures there is majority support for a candidate. When I vote it doesn't feel great to know a candidate only received twenty percent of the vote to win their position. It does not represent what the public voted for if a majority of votes don't go to a candidate. By allowing ranked choice, it helps the voting body feel like their voice was heard. When I vote I do consider who is the lesser of two evils. I want to stop only having to think this way when I vote because I don't want a "wasted" vote. With ranked choice it allows you to vote for the candidate you would like and then rank the lesser of two evils. This promotes a healthy voting system which will reduce the number of attack ads from candidates. These are just a couple benefits to consider about ranked choice.

There are negative arguments toward ranked choice voting but I believe they are unfounded and prove to not have much merit when ranked choice is established in a state. One of those arguments is that it violates "one person, one vote." This is inherently wrong because your vote still only counts once but you get a more even distribution of how you would like your vote to count. A more evenly distributed vote promotes a healthier democracy. Another argument is that it only helps one political party. This argument is also unfounded just like the previous argument you get to rank who you want the most. This means that everyone gets to pick whoever they think is best and then from there rank every other candidate you think best fits your preference. This inherently means that every party gets an even playing field.

With this I urge you to vote for both and S2951. These bills will give every Rhode Islander the ability to feel as represented as possible and allow for a stronger democracy. Thank you for your time.

Name: Brian Blais

Email: bblais@gmail.com

Residency: Smithfield

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, the fundamental right upon which all others rest. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to get it right.

Yes, ranked choice voting asks a bit more of us. Instead of marking a single box, we rank our preferences. It takes an extra moment, perhaps an extra explanation. But this small addition of complexity isn't a burden—it's an investment in fairness.

Our current system forces impossible choices: vote your conscience and risk "wasting" your vote, or vote strategically and silence your true voice. It allows candidates to win with mere pluralities while the majority opposed them. It punishes diversity of thought and rewards division.

Ranked choice voting fixes this. It ensures winners have genuine majority support. It lets you vote your hopes, not your fears. It encourages candidates to appeal broadly rather than divide narrowly.

If democracy is worth having, it's worth doing well. We navigate far more complex decisions every day—our jobs, our finances, our families. Surely we can handle ranking a few candidates to ensure our elections truly reflect the will of the people.

The question isn't whether we can handle ranked choice voting. It's whether we can afford not to.

Name: Amy Crawford

Email: Amycfd26@gmail.com

Residency: South Kingstown

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Ranked Choice Voting Support

Dear Honorable Members of RI House of Congress,

As a resident citizen of South Kingstown,

I strongly support Senate bills S2590 and S2951, which would allow towns to opt in to ranked Choice voting and the use of RCV for presidential primaries. This is a necessary step in making our democracy stronger and more fair, mitigating the political divide that is tearing our country apart.

Please get these bills moving in time for the next federal election.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Crawford

Wakefield

Amycfd@gmail.com

Name: Theodore Herman

Email: tedherman1@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

My name is Theodore R. Herman, I live in Providence, Rhode Island. We've got a great opportunity to implement Ranked Choice Voting in Rhode Island in time for upcoming Presidential primaries and future local elections, and I am urging you to support and pass Senate bills S2590 and S2951.

Here's why this is so important and why we should be passing these bills.

Ranked choice voting is a straightforward and bipartisan procedural reform grounded in some of the most fundamental of democratic principles: majority rule, the freedom to vote one's conscience, and the equal treatment of all votes. It ensures that election outcomes more accurately reflect the will of the people while giving every voter a stronger, more meaningful voice.

First, ranked choice voting upholds majority rule. In our current plurality elections, candidates can win an election with far less than 50% of the vote when the ballot features three or more candidates. Ranked choice voting corrects this by building into the ballot a runoff model using voters' ranked preferences, ensuring that the eventual winner earns majority support. This produces outcomes that better reflect the collective will of the electorate and strengthens voter confidence and satisfaction with the results.

Here's a local example. State Sen. Sam Zurier won the election in the primary race of his first campaign for the Senate with 31% of the vote. On that day most voters might have preferred another winner, but our plurality system likely prevented the true will of the voters from being expressed in the results. We'll never know, but I maintain that not knowing this can lead to voter frustration, reduced confidence in our democracy, and lower voter turnout in future elections. Sen. Zurier appreciates this, which has led him to be an avid supporter of ranked choice reform.

Second, ranked choice voting allows voters to choose their true first-choice candidate without fear of "throwing away" their vote. In plurality systems, voters often feel compelled to abandon their preferred candidate in favor of one they perceive as more viable. Ranked choice voting removes this pressure and enables voters to freely vote their conscience. If a voter's top choice cannot win, their vote is transferred to their next preference, meaning their ballot continues to count. This encourages voter turnout and trust in our democracy.

Third, ranked choice voting fully respects the principle of "one person, one vote." Every voter casts a single ballot, and each ballot is counted equally in every round. No voter has more influence than another; the system simply allows each person to express a fuller set of preferences on that one ballot. The counting process does not give anyone extra votes—it just ensures that each vote is used as effectively as possible to identify a majority-supported winner.

Finally, evidence shows that voters understand and support ranked choice voting. In New York City, for example, 96% of voters reported their ballot was understandable and simple to complete. Surveys across multiple jurisdictions consistently find that large majorities of voters say ranked choice voting is easy to use.

In sum, ranked choice voting is a bipartisan reform that strengthens majority rule, empowers voters, preserves electoral equality, and is both accessible and popular in practice.

We've got a great opportunity to implement ranked choice voting in Rhode Island in time for upcoming Presidential primaries and future local elections, now is the time to pass House Bills 7788 and 7981.

Sincerely,

Theodore R. Herman

2 Pratt St. Unit B3

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M: 914-261-1178

Name: Tony Jones

Email: tonyjonesinri@gmail.com

Residency: Charlestown

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Written Testimony in Support of Ranked Choice Voting

Senate Judiciary Committee

My name is Tony Jones, and I am a Rhode Island resident and the founder of the Party Party of Rhode Island. I am writing in support of implementing Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in our state.

Rhode Island consistently sees a significant number of unopposed races at both the state and local level. In some election cycles, a large share of General Assembly seats go uncontested, leaving many voters without a meaningful choice on the ballot. In certain districts, the primary election effectively decides the outcome, and the general election offers no competition.

This lack of competition has real consequences. It can reduce voter turnout, limit new ideas, and weaken accountability. When voters feel their participation will not influence the outcome, they are less likely to engage in the process.

Ranked Choice Voting offers a practical and forward-looking solution. By allowing voters to rank candidates in order of preference, RCV encourages more candidates to enter races without fear of splitting the vote. This is especially important in Rhode Island, where potential challengers, including independents and candidates outside the traditional party structure, may hesitate to run in lopsided races.

As the founder of the Party Party of Rhode Island, I have seen firsthand how difficult it can be to build momentum for new candidates in a system that discourages competition. RCV would create a more level playing field and give voters more voices and more meaningful choices.

RCV also ensures that winners have broader support. Instead of a candidate winning with a small plurality, the process reflects the preferences of a majority of voters. This leads to outcomes that better represent the electorate and can help build greater trust in our elections.

Adopting Ranked Choice Voting would be a meaningful step toward strengthening democracy in Rhode Island. It would encourage participation, increase competition, and ensure that our elections better reflect the will of the people.

Thank you for your consideration.

Name: Nancy Houston

Email: ndh_2@hotmail.com

Residency: Cranston

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Dear Chair and committee members,

Like many Americans, I am dismayed by how polarized our country has become. I attribute this to the dominance of our two party system which favors more extreme candidates in both parties. Third party candidates don't have a chance with many people believing that if they vote for one, they'd be wasting their vote. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy with people either holding their noses and voting for the candidate they perceive as least bad or, worse, not voting at all.

I've seen ranked choice voting work in Maine where my mom and sister live. It has allowed Maine voters to vote their conscience and for their first choice candidate even if that candidate is not a Republican or Democrat without trying to prejudge which candidate is likely to succeed.

Without rank choice voting a candidate that the majority of voters do NOT want can win with less than 50% if the opposition vote is split between two or more candidates. This is exactly what happened in Maine before rank choice voting was implemented. Another advantage of rank choice voting is that it forces candidates to run on their ideas and proposed policies rather than relying on their party label.

We need rank choice voting in Rhode Island! Please support it!

Name: Michael Maieli

Email: mmaieli@gmail.com

Residency: East Greenwich

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Hello,

My name is Mike Maieli and I am a resident of East Greenwich, RI. I am writing to voice my strong support for Ranked Choice Voting.

I've felt the frustration of voting in two crowded congressional primaries. The frustration wasn't the number of candidates. Those races brought strong debate, good ideas, and community engagement. The frustration was the voting system. Candidates with similar platforms split votes, which can lead to outcomes that do not reflect what most voters actually wanted.

It forces voters to play a game. Instead of simply voting for the people and issues they believe in, they feel pressure to vote strategically or hope other candidates drop out.

That is why I support these bills. Instead of feeling stuck voting for someone who has the best chance to win, Ranked Choice Voting lets people vote for candidates they genuinely support and feel excited about, without worrying about spoilers.

It also keeps candidates in the race, engaging with voters and debating the issues, instead of being forced out early or being seen as a spoiler.

In something like the 2028 presidential primary, where we should expect and welcome a large and diverse field, that should be a strength of our democracy, not a weakness of our voting system.

These bills are a nonpartisan improvement that helps ensure election outcomes better reflect what voters actually want. I respectfully urge you to support these bills.

Thank you for your time.

Name: Dante Diwan

Email: danteaadiwan@gmail.com

Residency: Cranston

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

To whom it may concern,

There are a myriad of benefits to the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting, but I am writing about a very important aspect of RCV that is extremely important for democracy, and that is its ability to help decrease polarization and its ability to make campaigns more positive.

Today's political system is widely viewed as dysfunctional, with the two opposite poles of the political spectrum remaining entrenched against each other, constantly opposing each other openly and with disdain to appease their base, while achieving very little actual progress on important legislation. This atmosphere also applies itself to campaigning, where voters are barraged with negative ads and rhetoric targeting the opposite side, which either helps fuel the fire of partisan hatred in the electorate, and causes a chunk of the electorate to sit out due to frustration. At one point, the American political system fostered compromise and sensible partisanship, with both parties acting as an umbrella for a large and diverse groups of constituents, and there were many politicians considered in 'the middle of the road'. Due to well-meaning reforms, and changes in the electorate and technology over the past few decades, however, the once functional system has become a cultivator of hyper partisanship and dysfunction, and the political center has practically shriveled up, as stated in Julian E. Zelizer's book 'In Defense of Partisanship'. The disappearance of the center is especially devastating, since a political center is needed to actually transmit ideas across the political spectrum and to put them into action. It also allowed for an entire electorate to shift politically. But without one, both sides throw ideas at each other without either being moved, which benefits no-one. hyperpolarization has also made each side see each other as the enemy, making people do anything to stop the someone they are opposed to. This, along with growing disgust with and distrust in the system, has brought our democracy to breaking point.

Though there is no one solution to fix this, and we need a multifaceted approach, RCV is one of these tools. Research done by FairVote on elections in Alaska and Cambridge MA have proven that RCV has both reduced legislative polarization and elected candidates that are more likely to vote across party lines, since politicians are no longer just accountable to their base, but have to appeal to a broad section of the electorate due to the winner of an RCV election having to win a majority of voters, and it encouraging higher turnout, also shown by FairVote. On top of this, FairVote has also done research showing that campaigns done in districts where RCV is used has increased the use of positive campaigning and has even increased positive media coverage, which is a desperately needed benefit. This is a product of candidates in RCV elections having to win over voters second and third choices, as well as also allowing for candidates to team up with each other in an election cycle.

At our nations 250th anniversary, let us not let democracy collapse in the birthplace of modern democracy, and where it is such an aspect of, it is inconceivable without. Right here in Rhode Island, we have a chance to save it with the bills S2950 and S2951, which will help implement RCV in the 2028 presidential primaries and allow localities to use RCV for local elections respectively, which are great ways for voters to experiment with its use. I hope the committee will take into account these bills and advance them to the general assembly for a floor vote.

Sincerely,

Dante Diwan.

Name: Colin Guthrie King

Email: colin.king@providence.edu

Residency: Providence, Rhode Island

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

The Rhode Island legislature is currently deliberating two bills for the introduction of Rank-Choice Voting for elections in cities and towns in the state of Rhode Island. The use of a ballot which permits voters to rank their choices is a no-brainer. Ranking your choices brings a drastic improvement to the way we pick our representatives. In a political system so rife with false and misleading advertising and deception, ranking the vote brings a bit of truth to voting: truth about the real preferences of the voters. Let me explain.

In my home state of Maine, many of us have in memory governors who won an election with a plurality – that is, with less than 50% of the vote. Angus King won as an Independent in 1995 with about 35% of the vote in the general election. John Baldacci won as a Democrat with 47% of the vote in 2002 and prevailed in a more contested election in 2006 with just 38% of the vote. Paul LePage was elected in 2010 with just over 37% of the vote, and won again in 2014 with less than 50%. The effect of plurality winners was tangible: people began to question the legitimacy of their elected governor. Many were left with the feeling that they could have had a better outcome if they had been able to express all their preferences. With rank choice voting, they can.

But voting is not just the expression of a preference. Voting is a means of finding consensus. With the introduction of ranked choice voting for federal elections in Maine in 2016, voters have found a way to vote for candidates not endorsed by either of the major political parties. This promotes independence and transparency and restores trust in our political system.

Some people argue that the system is complicated. At least voters in Maine have no problem with it: they understand very well that it simply gives them more power, namely the power to rank candidates, not just tick a box. What organizations like the Heritage Foundation are afraid of is the discovery of convergences in the parts of the electorate they are trying to polarize. For the entrepreneurs of polarization, rank choice voting is indeed dangerous. It helps people agree on things and discover common ground. Where could that lead? Perhaps to more empowered citizens with more choices? This makes it harder for big money to determine the outcomes of elections. And so RCV is also good against the corruption of our politics through big spending.

Obviously, this has the friends of money in politics worried, which is why they will attempt to fight it at all costs. But no aspirant to public office who wishes to really serve the public need fear this system. In my own experience as an educator, the introduction of rank choice voting for determining finalists for job searches has made my department at Providence College more collegial and better at recruiting the best candidates. We have been able to discover things we agree on that we never would have otherwise known. I wish the same for my new adopted state of Rhode Island.

Name: Korey Mendes

Email: korey.mendes@gmail.com

Residency: Warren

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

My name is Korey Mendes, and I'm writing because I believe ranked-choice voting is a practical, proven reform that strengthens our democracy by giving voters more voice and more choice.

First, RCV ensures that elected officials have broad support. Under our current system, candidates can win even when most voters preferred someone else, simply because similar candidates split the vote. Ranked-choice voting solves this by allowing voters to rank candidates in order of preference. If a voter's first choice can't win, their vote still counts toward their next choice. The result is a winner who reflects the majority's will, not just a narrow plurality.

Second, RCV encourages more positive, issue-focused campaigns. When candidates know they may need to earn second- or third-choice rankings, they have an incentive to appeal beyond their base. Communities that have adopted RCV often report less negative campaigning and more coalition-building. That's the kind of political culture many of us want to see.

Third, RCV gives voters the freedom to vote their true preferences without fear of "spoiling" the election. People can support new voices, independent candidates, or emerging leaders while still having a say in the final outcome. That makes elections more inclusive and more representative.

Finally, RCV is not an experiment. It's already used successfully in cities and states across the country. Voters consistently report that the system is easy to understand, and turnout remains strong. The evidence shows that when implemented with clear instructions and good public education, RCV works.

In short, ranked-choice voting strengthens majority rule, reduces polarization, and empowers voters. It's a simple change with meaningful benefits, and I urge the committee to support its adoption.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Name: Alexander Nunnelly

Email: alexjnunnelly@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

My name is Alex Nunnelly. I went to college in Providence and have been a registered voter here for 5 years. I believe that all people have a right to have their voices heard. Ranked Choice Voting does just that: it allows people to truly voice themselves through their vote. It allows people to vote for their preferred candidate without having to weigh whether or not that candidate will beat another. By allowing people to vote with their hearts, more people will choose to vote. As a high school teacher, I believe young people's voices matter. Ranked Choice Voting will help encourage younger people to get out and vote in elections. Please support ranked choice voting in Rhode Island.

Name: Adriana Casale

Email: Adrianacasale@yahoo.com

Residency: North Kingstown

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Dear Rhode Island Legislature,

I'm writing to express my strong support for ranked choice voting (RCV) in Rhode Island. As a constituent, I've witnessed many individuals hesitate to vote for their preferred third-party or independent candidate, fearing their vote will be "wasted" if that candidate doesn't win. This phenomenon, known as the "spoiler effect," perpetuates a system where voters feel forced to choose between the lesser of two evils, rather than casting a ballot for the candidate they truly support.

Ranked choice voting eliminates this dilemma, empowering voters to rank candidates in order of preference without fear of inadvertently helping their least preferred candidate win. By allowing voters to express their true preferences, RCV fosters a more inclusive and representative democracy, where every voice is heard and every vote counts.

RCV also promotes civility and issue-focused campaigning, as candidates are incentivized to appeal to a broader range of voters to secure second-choice votes. This leads to more nuanced and thoughtful governance, better reflecting the diversity of opinions in our community.

In states like Maine and cities like San Francisco, RCV has increased voter satisfaction and participation. It's time for Rhode Island to join this movement. I urge you to support legislation implementing ranked choice voting, ensuring our elections truly represent the will of the people.

Name: Philip Hall

Email: PHHallaboo@yahoo.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

On several occasions in recent election primaries -- both local and statewide -- I have seen my preferred candidate and my second choice candidate split the overall vote and the person I least wanted won with a plurality. For races with more than two candidates -- including general elections -- ranked choice voting is the only way to be sure that voters' wishes are truly observed.

Name: Emily Totten

Email: etotten330@gmail.com

Residency: North Smithfield

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Testimony in support of S2590 and S2951

To the members of the Rhode Island Senate,

My name is Emily Totten, and I've lived in North Smithfield, RI for nearly 10 years. I strongly support Ranked Choice Voting.

Ranked Choice Voting, or RCV, will ensure that the winner has support from a majority of voters while leveling the field so that a greater diversity of parties and candidates can compete. RCV will put voters first and restore faith that their votes matter at this critical time by providing the freedom to vote for their true favorite. Election integrity is stronger when more voters have confidence their votes will count.

This system is proven to increase voter turnout and can save money as well by reducing the number of elections that need to be held to determine the winner. Some variation on this system is used in multiple states across the country, including Massachusetts, Maine, New York, and New Hampshire (<https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting/>).

Thank you for your time and for considering this important issue.

Emily Totten

Name: Jacob Vigly

Email: jacvigly@gmail.com

Residency: Pawtucket

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

In support of S-2590 (RCV in Presidential Primaries starting 2028) and S-2951 (RCV in municipal elections).

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 support the two current ranked-choice voting bills S-2590 (RCV in Presidential Primaries starting 2028) and S-2951 (RCV in municipal elections).

Thank you for your time and work representing Rhode Islanders

Name: Jason Oconail

Email: missyoc13@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

Ranked choice voting means we won't need to hold runoff elections, which will save money, reduce hassle for busy people, and everyone's vote will count (since runoff elections typically have lower voter turnout). Also, if there are more than two candidates in a typical "most votes wins" election, it's very easy for the "winner" to not truly have the most support. It's entirely possible for the winning candidate to only get 38% of the vote when a majority of voters would have preferred someone else.

Name: Eric Bronner

Email: eric@veteransforallvoters.org

Residency: Navy Veteran and Founder of a national, nonpartisan mission, Veterans for All Voters - mobilizing a cross-partisan community of veterans as advocates for structural reform solutions.

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

To the Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Eric Bronner, and I submit this testimony as the Founder of Veterans for All Voters, a nonpartisan, veteran-led organization working to strengthen our Republic through reforms that put voters first.

We respectfully urge you to support the pending bills that would bring ranked choice voting to Rhode Island's 2028 presidential primary and allow cities and towns to opt in for local elections, and to reject legislation that would ban ranked choice voting in Rhode Island.

Veterans for All Voters works with veterans and military families across the country who want a political system that rewards broad support, real competition, and accountable leadership. From our work in states across the country, we have seen firsthand why ranked choice voting matters.

First, ranked choice voting gives voters more freedom and more voice. It lets people vote for the candidate they truly believe in without worrying about "wasting" their vote, or helping elect the candidate they like least. In crowded elections, especially presidential primaries, that matters. Voters should be able to vote honestly and still have their voice count as the field narrows.

Second, ranked choice voting encourages candidates to earn broader support. Instead of only speaking to the loudest faction of a base, candidates have an incentive to reach more people and build wider trust. That is healthier for campaigns, healthier for public confidence, and healthier for our constitutional Republic.

Third, these Rhode Island proposals are practical and measured. The presidential primary bill is limited and workable. The municipal option respects local control by letting communities decide for themselves whether ranked choice voting fits their needs. What Rhode Island should not do is shut the door on reform before voters and municipalities even have the chance to use it. A statewide ban would take choice away from Rhode Islanders and prevent communities from improving their own elections.

Veterans know leadership should be earned. We served alongside Americans of every background and belief, and we know the country is strongest when the rules reward problem-solving, broad support, and respect for every voter. Ranked choice voting moves elections in that direction.

Rhode Island has an opportunity to lead with a practical, nonpartisan reform that gives voters more meaningful choice and helps produce winners with broader support. We urge you to advance the pro-RCV bills and reject any ban on ranked choice voting.

Thank you for your consideration,

/s/ Eric H. Bronner

Name: Scott Callas

Email: scott.callas@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

My name is Scott Callas. I was born and raised in Rhode Island and currently live in the North End of Providence. I am writing to urge you to support S-2590 and S-2951 to bring ranked choice voting to Rhode Island.

In a state like ours that almost exclusively supports one of the major two parties, the result is far too many uncontested general elections. The primaries become the real contest, but this creates three problems. First, it trivializes general elections and overvalues a contest with lower turnout. Second, it redistributes some power of the electoral process to partisan officials. Finally, it discourages independent voters, makes them feel irrelevant, and creates cynicism.

That final point is particularly significant. I have done some political canvassing, and most people I have spoken with out on the doors identify at least nominally as independent and feel disengaged from the political process, even at the municipal and state level. Despite this, when you are willing to speak with them and ask questions, they have a lot of genuine concerns and thoughts.

Clearly they are paying attention and want to feel better represented by their government, but they do not like showing up on election day and seeing a single box to check for many offices. They do not want to be forced to fit neatly into one party. They want to feel like there is a real marketplace of ideas in the political system. Perhaps most of all, they want to feel enthusiastic about their vote and not a calculation about the lesser of evils.

I am sure it is well-established in this political climate why it is so important that our citizens feel engaged and represented. Rhode Island has an opportunity to join the vanguard on this issue. Our founding heritage is freedom of conscience and spiritual plurality. Ranked choice voting would be a natural, consistent extension of these principles. I once again urge you to support S-2590 and S-2951.

Name: Nancy Kellner

Email: nrkellner@gmail.com

Residency: Bristol

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

I strongly support the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting in Rhode Island. My reason is simple. Often the candidates available have many similarities in their platforms and backgrounds. To be able to indicate that Person X is my first choice while Person Y is a close second, leaving Person Z out of the equation completely will best reflect who I want representing me in representative government.

This is especially true in a state like Rhode Island with multiple strong candidates.

Name: Siraj Sindhu

Email: siraj.a.sindhu@gmail.com

Residency: Providence

Testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2590: ELECTIONS -- PRIMARIES FOR ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FOR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Why I support this bill:

My name is Siraj Sindhu and I live in the West End of Providence. I am also a PhD candidate in Political Science at Brown University, where I research the challenges of building and maintaining democratic forms of government. I am strongly in support of Ranked Choice Voting.

The current first-past-the-post system simply selects the candidate who receives the most votes, which might sound good at first. But in reality, this intuitive-seeming system often fails to select the candidate who actually best fits the preferences of the electorate. The candidate who gets the most first-place votes might not actually be preferred by the preponderance of the electorate.

RCV would fix this. It would allow voters to rank their candidates, rather than just choosing one. That way, if your preferred candidate is not the winner, your vote isn't wasted. Instead, your vote can still be applied to the other ranked candidates on your ballot. This gives voters more of an opportunity to make their voices heard.

RCV optimizes our elections and allows the nuanced preferences of voters to be legible to our electoral system. Voters are not just binary machines. Most voters don't only like one candidate while remaining impassive to all the rest. Voters are complex, nuanced human beings with subtle preferences and rankings. RCV allows that to be taken into account.

Also, voter turnout is chronically low in parts of our state. This is partly because of the wariness many voters have about their vote being "wasted." Many voters feel that if they don't vote for the winning candidate, they may as well not have voted at all. RCV encourages democratic participation by making it much more possible for each ballot to truly count.

Please pass RCV. Thank you.