

Testimony regarding S.32
March 15, 2023
Betty J. Keller, MD
Member, LWVVT

Thank you, Senators of the Committee on Government Operations, for your hard work to improve this bill for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Vermont Presidential Primaries.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont supports expanding the bill to allow communities to choose to select officials by RCV without having to get permission from the state legislature to change their charters.

We also support expanding the bill to create a study committee to examine the issues regarding statewide elections.

We appreciate the changes in the bill made in response to testimony from Sam McGinty of Vermont Public Interest Group.

We would like to offer additional comments to improve the bill.

The following notes are related to Draft No. 2.3 – S.32.

Starting at the top of page 4,

Because there are limitations in the machines counting the ballots, instead of:

(2) The ballot shall allow voters to assign rankings to candidates that are equal to the number of printed candidate names and blank write-in lines.

The LWVVT proposes something like this:

(2) The ballot shall allow voters to assign rankings to candidates that are equal to the number of printed candidate names and blank write-in lines, or to the maximum number allowed by the tabulation machine, whichever is lesser.

Or

(2) The ballot shall allow voters to assign rankings to candidates that are the lesser of either the number of printed candidate names and blank write-in lines, or the number of candidates allowed by the tabulation machine.

Because there is no benefit to moving ballots around when the winner is already determined and because unnecessarily moving ballots may reduce voter confidence,

Instead of:

§ 2691d. RANKED-CHOICE VOTING TABULATION ...

(1) Elections with one winner.

(A) If there are two or fewer active candidates, then tabulation is complete, and the candidate with the most votes is declared the winner of the election.

We propose something like this:

§ 2691d. RANKED-CHOICE VOTING TABULATION ...

(1) Elections with one winner.

(A) If a candidate has received a majority of the votes in the first round, then tabulation is complete, and the candidate with the most votes is declared the winner of the election.

We would prefer to defer on the section on multiple winners

(2) Elections with multiple winners.

(A) If the number of active candidates is equal to the number of seats available plus one, then tabulation is complete, and the candidates with the most votes are declared the winners of the election.

(B) If the number of active candidates is more than the number of seats available plus one, then the active candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, the votes for the eliminated candidate are transferred to each ballot's next-ranked active candidate, and a new round begins.

until the summer study committee can review that.

In section 4, the LWVVT would like more latitude for the Secretary of States office in use of the funds for education of municipalities. We would like towns considering RCV to have resources for education before making their decision.

Thank you for your consideration.

Betty J. Keller, MD
Member, LWVVT