

**Testimony relating to HF 2486  
Hearing in House Elections Committee, March 17, 2023**

Dear Chair Freiberg and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mark Ritchie and I served as Minnesota's Secretary of State from 2007 until retiring from elected public service in 2015.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this very important legislative proposal.

When first elected, I inherited the responsibility of chairing a task force created by the legislature to find ways to put new technologies to work in the field of business services and transactions related to mortgages and real estate transaction. My predecessor, Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer, had done an excellent job of giving birth to this exploratory group and in surfacing the many complexities and challenges that the taskforce was created to solve.

In my second year as Secretary of State I chaired a second taskforce, this one to sort out some of the opportunities and challenges related to the re-introduction of Instant Run-off Voting, a system of voting that flourished in the past but at that time only Hopkins had serious experience to share with their colleagues from Minneapolis who wanted to put test this approach, what we now call Ranked Choice Voting, under modern circumstances.

I was proud of the work we did 15 years ago, surfacing concerns and challenges, and pleased with the outcome and creative approaches that were the outcome of this taskforce. One of the top election administrators in the State of Minnesota had the historic responsibility of administering the first election using Instant Run-off Voting and it came off incredibly well.

Today you have in front of you proposed legislation to create a new taskforce with the responsibility of taking what we have learned over a couple decades of experience and turning that knowledge and experience into a new chapter in the story of Minnesota's leadership in election administration.

As with anything new or seemingly new there are questions about whether there will be challenges and whether we, as Minnesota's best in the nation election administrators are creative enough or technologically savvy enough to meet whatever might arise. Covid has made us thoughtfully cautious about all things, not to mention cyber-attacks and yet to be discovered wonders of artificial intelligence.

When I am asked "are we up to the challenge" I have the great pleasure of answering with full confidence based on the real-world experience of 8 years of working side-by-side with our amazing local and county officials who are the ones who make elections happen.

When I am asked, why change anything -aren't our elections processes and procedures the best in the country I always agree that we are the best but I always say – but we have to keep getting better and better is we want to remain leaders.

I share Secretary Kiffmeyer and Simons pride in Minnesota being number one in elections. This

legislation will create the taskforce of the future. I support this legislation because I want to be as proud of the future as I am proud of our past.

*Mark Ritchie*