

House Local Government Division
March 17, 2021 – 8:30 a.m.
Re: Vote to pass H.F. 89

Dear Chair Masin and members of the Local Government Division,

I am writing to express my support for H.F. 89 and hope that you will take action to advance it out of committee. I serve on city council in Moorhead and am a Political Sociology professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead. I have first-hand knowledge as well as over thirty years of experience studying elections. I am deeply concerned about growing divisiveness in elections, as was evident by the horrifying attack on our nation's capitol on January 6th. As individuals, we must take responsibility for building bridges rather than fanning divisions. I took this to heart in my own experience as a candidate in 2018. During my campaign, I never referred to the other candidates as my opponents. We were instead three citizens with differing views of how best to serve the citizens of Moorhead. I also committed to reach out to all constituents, not just those more closely aligned with my positions. I knocked every door and did all that I could to engage and learn from all constituents. Unfortunately, I am atypical and negative campaigns in which candidates narrowly focus on mobilizing their base are more often the norm, leading voters to become more polarized and disenchanting.

Scholarly evidence shows that electoral methods in which candidates with a plurality of votes win encourages candidates to play to their base and suppress support for their opponents' base. By comparison, Rank Choice Voting encourages candidates to build connections with constituents outside their base because they may gain support as a 2nd or 3rd choice. Rank Choice and similar electoral methods have less negative campaigning than do those under the commonly used plurality-winner method.

We are at a crucial time in our country's history. We can continue to move down a path of division and watch our democracy further erode or we can build bridges and allow citizens to be active, engaged participants in our electoral process. Rank Choice Voting is one important tool that can help to move in that direction. Our cities and other governing bodies in Minnesota should have the right to decide if this is a tool that we wish to use. I strongly encourage you to support H.F. 89.

Sincerely yours,

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