

House Local Government Division
March 17, 2021 – 8:30 a.m.
Re: Vote to Pass HF89

Dear Chair Masin and members of the Local Government Division:

I am a Bloomington resident and organizer for the campaign to bring Ranked Choice Voting to our municipal elections. I am thrilled that voters passed it on the ballot last fall and that we will start using Ranked Choice Voting for our city council elections this year.

I'm also proud to support HF89 (SF218), authored by my Rep. Steve Elkins, which would give *all* cities in Minnesota the ability Bloomington had to adopt Ranked Choice Voting if they want to, and allow voters to use Ranked Choice Voting for statewide and federal races.

A team of dedicated volunteers and I talked to thousands of Bloomington voters about Ranked Choice Voting before the November election. The vast majority didn't know about Ranked Choice Voting, but once they understood how it works, were supportive and in many cases, enthusiastic. Here's why:

Voters are frustrated with our current political climate - how polarized we've become, the limited viable options in our current voting system, the negative campaigning, and the lack of diverse representation.

Ranked Choice Voting:

- Empowers voters by giving them more choices on election day and allowing them to rank their preferences. They no longer have to worry about third-party candidates being “spoilers” or “wasting” their vote by choosing the candidate they like the best.
- Because candidates need second-choice votes as well as first-choice votes to win, they talk to and appeal to a broader spectrum of voters, including their opponents' supporters. This reduces negative campaigning.
- Ensures winners have the support of a majority of voters. No longer can a candidate win with a minority of support due to vote-splitting among the competition.
- Fosters diversity and inclusion. Cities that have implemented Ranked Choice Voting have seen an increase in the number of women and BIPOC candidates both running and winning. As representative bodies of government, our elected officials should reflect the diversity of their constituents.
- And, in the case of Bloomington and other cities in MN, it eliminates the need for municipal primaries, which are costly and time-consuming and rarely exceed 10% voter turnout. Ranked Choice Voting combines the primary and general election into a single election when the most voters turn out to weigh in on all the candidates. **In Bloomington, that means a savings of \$100,000 each municipal election cycle.**

In Bloomington's 2019 municipal elections, our mayor was retiring after 20 years. We had five mayoral candidates running in the primary, as well as four at-large city council candidates and three candidates running for a district city council seat. 10% of voters showed up for the primary

and eliminated half of the candidates before most voters got a chance to hear from them. It doesn't make sense to pay for and conduct two elections, including a low-turnout primary, when we can hold just one election in which many more voters make their voices heard.

I strongly believe that not only should all cities and jurisdictions in Minnesota have the ability to adopt Ranked Choice Voting if they so choose, but also Ranked Choice Voting should be used for our statewide and federal elections. It is a key election reform that has the potential to not only improve voter satisfaction and representation, but also help heal the divides that are tearing our nation apart. Please vote YES on HF89 and advance it out of committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views,
Laura Calbone
Bloomington, MN