

March 15, 2021

Dear Chair Sandra Masin and members of the Local Government Division,

Our world changed one year ago, when a national emergency was declared in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, our nation's response to the pandemic has too often been polarized and based on politics rather than facts, data and science. We desperately needed an effective, functioning government, but more often than not over the past year, we saw partisan bickering, dysfunction, and misinformation spreading like a virus itself.

Unfortunately, I believe our current electoral system is structured in a way that doesn't allow us to bring out the best in one another and to govern effectively. We politicize so many things, and the coronavirus has become Exhibit A. We must address the polarization and dysfunction plaguing our democracy so that we can effectively respond to the pandemic and our next health crisis.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is the best step we can take to redress the dysfunction in our current system and create a more representative government with leaders who want to focus on fixing problems rather than scoring partisan points.

RCV allows voters to rank their preferences, and the rankings are used to conduct a virtual runoff to ensure elected officials earn broad majority support. It is a simple but powerful change to the ballot that encourages candidates to reach beyond their base and build broad coalitions of support, incentivizes positive campaigns based on the issues and elects leaders who are motivated to solve problems and get things done.

Leaders have a tremendous impact on policy and how we respond to a public health crisis. To respond effectively, we need leaders that focus on the issues, speak the truth and unify the public for a common purpose, and we are far more likely to elect those leaders using RCV.

HF 89 would implement RCV for state and federal offices and would allow local jurisdictions to adopt RCV if they wish. It is the very reform we need for this moment, and I urge members of the Local Government Division to vote yes on HF 89 and pass it out of committee.

I speak on behalf of myself personally, and not on behalf of the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Mike Osterholm