

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

I was elected as an at-large member of the Bloomington City Council in November of 2019. At the time, our local elections required both a primary election in August and a general election in November. Most Bloomington voters were not aware of the municipal primary in August and not surprisingly, the primary had very low voter turnout, typically in the single digits. Then that tiny slice of the electorate decided who advanced to the general election ballot, preventing the larger and more representative voter pool in November from weighing in on all the candidates.

The primary not only made it more difficult for voters who had to show up to the polls twice, but also may have discouraged a broader array of candidates from running in the first place since they had to face a two-step election process. Requiring an expensive summer primary where voter turnout is low and less diverse is one of the biggest obstacles to both candidates and voters of color in local elections.

In November of 2020, Bloomington voters passed a ballot measure to implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for its municipal elections. RCV eliminates the unnecessary and expensive primary election and allows all candidates to run in November when voter turnout is higher and more representative of the community. This encourages a more diverse array of candidates to run and means that more community members are engaged in our local elections -- which will lead to better outcomes for our community.

I am excited that Bloomington can become a leader in civic engagement and for the many benefits RCV brings: From saving time and taxpayer dollars to encouraging positive campaigning and civility to promoting more inclusive and representative elections. Other cities should have the opportunity to enjoy these benefits, but unfortunately under current law, only charter cities -- 15% of cities in Minnesota -- have the ability to pass this reform. RCV Bill HF 89 would remedy this problem by allowing all local jurisdictions to adopt RCV if they wish. It also expands RCV to state and federal elections, which I believe is right for Minnesota.

I urge you to vote yes on HF 89 and pass it out of committee to allow for local control of municipal elections and expand the use of RCV in Minnesota.

Thank you for your time.

Jenna Carter  
Councilmember At-Large  
City of Bloomington, Minnesota

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