

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Oppose LD 1083

“An Act To Implement Ranked-choice Voting for Presidential Primary and General Elections in Maine”

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau. I serve as the policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center and am here to testify in opposition to LD 1083, “An Act To Implement Ranked-choice Voting for Presidential Primary and General Elections in Maine.”

The Maine Heritage Policy Center does not support the implementation of ranked-choice voting (RCV) for the presidential primary and general elections in the State of Maine. There are several facets of RCV with which we take issue. For one, RCV exhausts ballots and excludes them from the final vote tally, meaning votes are essentially thrown away if an individual only voted for a single candidate, or multiple candidates, who are mathematically eliminated from contention.

The design of RCV explicitly discounts the votes from individuals who only vote for candidates that are not included in the last round of counting. For example, in the election for the 2nd congressional district, 8,253 votes were not counted in the second round because they were exhausted ballots.¹ This makes it so the winner of a RCV election wins a faux majority. Jared Golden did not win 50 percent of the votes cast on Election Day in 2018; he won after enough votes were eliminated to push him over the 50 percent threshold. If those 8,253 votes were counted in the final total, Jared Golden would have received 49.1 percent of the vote, which is less than a majority. Therefore, using RCV does not result in a true majority vote for candidates.

In addition, the 2018 race in the 2nd congressional district did not benefit third party candidates as proponents of this new system suggested.² Approximately eight percent of the vote was allocated to third party candidates on the first round of voting.³ All of those candidates were eliminated on the second round. It is unclear if RCV will benefit third party candidates in the future, but the limited data available suggests it will not make a difference.

If the State of Maine wishes to award elections to candidates who receive a majority of the votes cast, a more fair approach and true approach would be to pursue a runoff election system. It

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/>

² <http://www.rcvmaine.com/thirdparties>

³ <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/results/results18.html#Nov6>

We the people of Maine...

THE MAINE HERITAGE POLICY CENTER

would be more transparent to conduct a separate election, and the winner would receive a true majority. RCV asks voters to guess which candidate will be one of the “top two” vote receivers in hopes that their vote counts in the final tally.

To that end, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought Not to Pass” on this measure. Thank you.