

Submitter: Jonathan Bright  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB3509

Please vote no on HB 3509. This form of ranked choice voting is highly flawed, but has been spreading around the country based on misconceptions, and its adoption and misplaced popularity is impeding real reforms that would actually make a positive difference.

I used to be an advocate of this form of RCV myself, when I was less informed, but after studying voting reform and social choice theory for over a decade, and becoming familiar with dozens of other voting systems and their pros and cons, I have changed my mind and see this system as a step backwards, not forwards.

This system is claimed to eliminate the spoiler effect, promote moderate candidates, make it safe to vote honestly for your true favorite without wasting your vote, and guarantee that the winning candidate has majority support, but all of these claims are false or misleading, and it does not actually fix the problems it is intended to.

The fundamental flaw of this voting system is that it eliminates candidates based only on first-choice rankings. These first-choices rankings get split between similar candidates, just like vote-splitting under our current system, which leads to the same problems, such as the spoiler effect, center-squeeze effect, etc. These effects result in unrepresentative candidates winning elections and perpetuate a polarized two-party system, which I believe is hugely detrimental to our society.

While we can work around these problems under our current system by voting tactically for the "lesser of two evils", voting tactically is not as feasible under Hare RCV, since it behaves bizarrely and unpredictably in elections with three or more strong candidates: Increasing the ranking of a candidate may actually hurt them, while decreasing the ranking for a candidate can actually help them. So the outcomes of Hare RCV elections with honest voters can actually be *worse* than the status quo of FPTP with tactical voters.

There are other voting systems based on ranked ballots that do not have these flaws, such as Ranked Robin, Total Vote Runoff (Baldwin's Method), Schulze Method, Ranked Pairs, etc. There are also voting systems based on independently evaluating each candidate, such as STAR Voting or Approval+Runoff, which produce more democratic outcomes. I would strongly urge you to research these alternatives and consult with experts before adopting a flawed voting system that only perpetuates our current problems.