

June 2, 2017

Senator Mason, Representative Luchini, members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today *against* LD1625 – An Act to Repeal Maine’s Ranked Choice Voting Law. I also would like to speak in favor of LD1624 – a bill that initiates the process of amending Maine’s Constitution so that the Ranked Choice Voting Law can be applied in all elections in 2018. My name is Karen Kusiak and I live in Fairfield.

Time is short today, so I will give you a summary of my message from last summer when I was asked to provide a recorded testimony in favor of Question 5 – The Ranked Choice Voting Initiative Maine voters overwhelmingly supported last November. At that time, I spoke about civility and about voter participation.

During the summer and fall of 2016 I was struck by what political scientists offered as research findings on voting methods. Evidence from Ireland where a ranked choice system is used indicates that campaigns are indeed more civil. I am not just speculating that campaigns will be more civil; rather, evidence supports it.

Another finding from San Francisco and Oakland CA where Ranked Choice Voting is used in local elections is that more eligible voters engage in the voting process – they show up to vote – as compared to elections held at the same time in neighboring cities. Overall, a study by political scientists Kimball and Anthony of the University of Missouri – Saint Louis revealed a “10 point increase in voter turnout compared to primary and run-off elections.” (FairVote)

Greater civility in elections and greater voter participation sound like great outcomes to me. Yet, electing officials who have the support of the voters is perhaps the strongest reason to support Ranked Choice Voting.

I urge you to follow the will of Maine voters and deny the repeal of the Ranked Choice Voting Law. Instead, seek a way to make Ranked Choice Voting the process that will be used in all state and federal elections in Maine.

http://www.fairvote.org/research_rcvoterturnout

Thank you,

Karen Kusiak
Fairfield, Maine