

## Joyce Brewer

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 9, 2023 1:08 PM  
**To:** Joyce Brewer  
**Subject:** H 179 Ranked Choice Voting Support email

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Dear Chairman Guthrie and Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee:

It is my understanding that H 179 has been referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee after passing in the House by a wide margin. I am writing to encourage you to swiftly send this bill to the Senate Floor with a Do Pass recommendation.

As the Treasurer for the Idaho Republican Party, I can speak on behalf of the IDGOP State Central Committee representing all Idaho Republicans in reminding you that the State Committee adopted a resolution at its winter meeting to object to any form of immediate runoff voting in Idaho. We took this action because ranked choice voting is one of those ideas that on its surface sounds like a good idea and a money saver by eliminating runoff voting, but that simply is not the case.

As a systems engineer for Raytheon, I used a form of rank choice voting all the time when conducting trade studies—examinations of various technical solutions to determine various tradeoffs between options. Once the number of choices exceeds three or four it becomes very difficult for the average human mind to truly evaluate between choices. We had a complex set of evaluation tools that we used to look at and evaluate each separate criteria, and then cross check our scores looking at the whole system.

In the voting booth, voters do not have time to do that complex analysis on each candidate. Most voters will walk into the booth knowing who they want, and who they don't want. The vast majority don't know anything about the other candidates on the ballot. It is my belief, since we don't have the ability to collect evidence on the choices they make in the booth, that many voters simply start numbering off candidates. We do know that when people are asked to rank their favorite of most things, they know their first choice for and first choice against, but they can't really give a fair evaluation of the rest.

Take football, for example. I am a Chiefs fan. I like a few other teams for one reason or another, and I absolutely detest the Raiders. But I would be hard pressed to rank all 32 teams—and that's with time to think it through. In the voting booth, people will just guess.

By eliminating rank choice voting, we may face the expense of a runoff, but we will have an additional campaign period where those two candidates can make their case without the ground clutter of the other five. Voters had the opportunity to decide between those two and make their decision based only on the campaigns of those two candidates.

Under rank choice voting, the second and third choice votes of candidate only count in follow on rounds if their choice is still in the race. If not, then those votes don't count.

Rank choice voting asks voters to vote for candidates that may or may not actually be in the race. Once every ten years or so, a candidate dies shortly before election day and still wins the election. Voters knew he was dead, but they still

preferred him over the other guy. But when voters are making ranked choices, they don't have that knowledge of whether or not their choices will be a candidate in that round.

Ranked choice voting is fundamentally wrong, and I urge you to support H179 and send it to the full Senate.

Sincerely,

Steve Bender

Treasurer  
Idaho Republican Party

## Joyce Brewer

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**From:** Melissa Blevins <MelissaPrecinct25@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2023 4:38 PM  
**To:** Joyce Brewer; Senator Mark Harris; Senator Linda Wright Hartgen; Senator Scott Herndon; Senator Rick Just; Senator Todd Lakey; Senator Abby Lee; Senator Brian Lenney; Senator Dave Lent; Senator Tammy Nichols  
**Subject:** YES on H-179 - NO RANKED-CHOICE VOTING!

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Dear Senators:

Please align with the House and vote **YES to pass H-179** to prohibit election gimmicks like ranked-choice voting.

I don't like anything that messes with the electoral college and the genius of what our Founding Fathers have set up for election fairness in the nation. Let's not do that to our beloved state.

Please keep the sanctity of our elections intact. Vote YES on H-179.

Respectfully,

Melissa Blevins

Precinct 25 Committeeman  
D11

**Stan Lockhart**  
Former Chairman  
Utah Republican Party



**Saul Anuzis**  
Former Chairman  
Michigan Republican Party

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Testimony from:

Saul Anuzis  
Former Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party

and

Stan Lockhart  
Former Chairman of the Utah Republican Party

**In OPPOSITION to H. 179**  
to prohibit ranked choice voting

Idaho Senate Committee on State Affairs

Dear Committee Members,

We write to you as former members of the Republican National Committee and former State Party Chairmen with deep interest and a long-time commitment to the success and vitality of the Republican Party.

We write in opposition to H. 179, which would prohibit use of ranked choice voting (RCV) in all elections in your state. We strongly believe that blanket opposition to RCV will hurt our chances to meet our goal of nominating the strongest possible candidates, and remove the chance for cities to adopt RCV to address “split votes” and “runoff fatigue” in their elections.

RCV is not a “one size fits all” system. Rather than throw the baby out with the bath water, let’s take time to learn why many Republicans in many states like RCV *in some form or in some context*. Supporting some applications of RCV does not mean endorsement of how RCV is used in Alaska, as one timely example.

We believe local and state parties should have the option to use whatever system they see fit, given their specific needs and situation.

**First, we know some have real concerns that we should take seriously about using RCV in general elections, and our focus is on the nominating process.** It’s true that in our two-party system, third-party candidates are often “spoilers” – and it’s true that Republicans have been far more likely than Democrats to be affected by minor parties. There are five Democrats in the Senate today who defeated a Republican by a margin that was less than half the votes earned by a Libertarian Party candidate in that race.

But where we focus our attention is on use of RCV in primaries, caucuses and conventions where desired by state and local parties. Virginia provides a particularly good example. We invite you to read this important analysis by Virginia Republican political consultant Eric Wilson on the value he has seen for Republicans in nominating candidates with RCV in his state.

(<https://ericwilson.com/ranked-choice-voting-offers-a-promising-path-for-virginia-elections/>)

Contrast Glenn Youngkin's big win in Virginia in 2021, after winning a clear majority of the vote with RCV, with painful losses in a string of U.S. Senate races in 2022 after non-majority, split-vote winners of Republican primaries. Those defeats hurt our party's chances to stop Joe Biden's radical agenda.

Nominees chosen with majority support in their primaries do better in general elections than those chosen by a minority of voters. We can use that fact to our advantage. Our state and local Republican parties deserve the chance to try RCV to strengthen their nominees.

R Street recently released an important report on the idea of using RCV in the presidential nominating process. As we prepare for another crowded field in 2024, we want a voting rule that will help us pick the strongest consensus candidate among Republican voters and activists – one ready to win in November. It would be wrong to leave tools on the table that can help us win.

**Second, RCV is not a new idea nor a liberal idea.** Robert's Rules of Order recommends RCV – also known as “preferential voting” – as a viable option for the election of organizational officers (see RONR (12th ed.) 44:11, 45.2; 45:3; 45:62), as do most other parliamentary guides. This explains:

- Why six southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina – have their overseas and military voters cast RCV ballots when holding runoffs to give them a greater chance to have their vote count. (<https://sos.ga.gov/page/military-and-overseas-voting>)
- Why hundreds of private associations use RCV for leadership elections, including the American Chemical Society (the world's largest scientific society), American Psychiatric Association (more than 38,000 members); and American Psychological Association (approximately 150,000 members).
- Why RCV was used in 2020 by the Indiana Republican Party at its state convention to select its nominee for attorney general in a four-candidate race. (<https://wibc.com/89253/rokita-chosen-as-republican-attorney-general-nominee/>)
- Why Utah Republicans have used RCV at its state convention for major offices, from Governor to Congress, and a 2020 post-convention survey found over 70 percent of participants liked using RCV. (<https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/725501.pdf>)
- Why the Republican Party of Virginia in 2020-22 has used RCV to elect its party chair, to nominate five candidates for Congress, and, most impactfully, to nominate its victorious statewide ticket in 2021 led by Glenn Youngkin for governor in a seven-candidate race. (<https://www.virginiamercury.com/2021/05/10/virginia-gop-picks-glenn-youngkin-as-its-nominee-governor-heres-what-we-know-about-him/>)

- Why Canada's Conservative Party has used RCV to pick its national leader in its last three leadership elections. (<https://cpcassets.conservative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/09111707/bb6620b6a719d2b.pdf>)

**Third, there is no single model of RCV, and forms of it are completely consistent with our goals for election integrity.** RCV can be used with a sensible limit of five rankings permitted for voters, for example. RCV instead can be implemented in a simple two-round “instant runoff.” RCV can be run such that it is fully “precinct summable” with all data reported locally. Hand tallies can confirm the results, as the Republican Party of Virginia has shown repeatedly.

The Alaska model is very different from using RCV in primaries. That system is based on ending primaries as we know them and allowing more than one Republican to advance to the general election, where RCV is used to allow voters to consider four candidates. That is not what we are discussing.

We respectfully suggest that there be a clear distinction taken into consideration of the difference between the use of RCV in general elections versus in local nonpartisan elections, primaries, and/or the nominating process. RCV in this form isn't some slippery slope proposal that is going to fool Republicans and/or conservatives into using something that will harm their general election chances. We also believe state parties and their respective party activists are more than capable of picking a nominating system that best fits their specific circumstances.

In the spirit of federalism that is so important to our party, we believe cities and parties should have the right to decide if, how and when they might use one voting system over another to elect or nominate their candidates.

We ask that you postpone action on this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Saul Anuzis  
Former Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party

Stan Lockhart  
Former Chairman of the Utah Republican Party

Testimony from:  
Eric Wilson

**In OPPOSITION of**

**H 179**  
to prohibit ranked choice voting

Idaho Senate Committee on State Affairs

Dear Committee Members,

Ranked Choice Voting & Party Primaries

As the Idaho Senate considers legislation to ban or otherwise limit the use of ranked choice voting (RCV) or instant runoff voting in state elections, I encourage you to consider the unintended consequences of this drastic step that would limit the opportunity for more grassroots conservatives to have a say in nominating candidates.

I have been a consultant for many Republican campaigns and active in the Republican Party of Virginia, where I served on the state central committee from 2020 - 2021. I believe the Republican Party - and voters all over - can benefit from ranked choice voting. Virginia shows exactly why.

With the rise of new media, grassroots candidates with limited establishment support have become more competitive. This has led to a proliferation of crowded primary fields. Between 2000 and 2018, the number of primaries with more than 3 candidates at the federal level has tripled. These nomination contests result in more nominees winning with a plurality – rather than a majority – of support.

In Virginia, the political parties have historically enjoyed broad leeway to determine the method of nomination for their candidates. This includes party-run processes like conventions which are held in a single location on a single day, or so-called firehouse primaries held at multiple locations with flexible timing. The parties may also opt for a state-run primary election with a plurality winner and no runoff requirement.

In 2021, Virginia Republicans adopted an “unassembled” convention which employed ranked choice voting to nominate their statewide candidates. It worked. We had the strongest ticket we’ve ever nominated according to many party insiders.

Following the success of that process, which led to the nomination of Virginia Republicans’ first statewide elected officials in more than a decade, three congressional district party committees

adopted RCV in 2022. In the 8th, 10th, and 11th congressional districts, Republicans nominated their candidates via RCV.

Virginia's 10th Congressional District also neighbors the 7th Congressional District, sharing portions of Prince William County. Republicans in the 7th opted for a state-run primary. This offered a unique opportunity to test the effects of the method of nomination on candidate images and voter perceptions of campaign quality.

In the 10th Congressional District, 84% of voters described the campaign as positive compared to just 59% in the 7th Congressional District. Two-thirds of voters in the 10th rated the candidates as having run a mostly positive campaign, with an additional 18% saying the race was somewhat positive.

Because the nomination contest in the 10th Congressional District was considered more positive than in the 7th, Hung Cao, the Republican nominee chosen via RCV, emerged with 86% favorability among voters. In the 7th, Yesli Vega's favorability among primary voters was just 64%.

Cao was also better known by voters with 94% name identification compared to 77% for Vega in the 7th. This is likely due to the fact that in the RCV firehouse primary, voters were able to indicate preferences for each candidate and researched all of the options. Indeed, 97% of ballots had enough preferences to be counted for all nine rounds.

By removing incentives to attack candidates, the RCV firehouse primary in the 10th District also benefited those candidates who did not win. Jeanine Lawson, who finished second behind Cao, had a +59% net favorability. Brandon Michon, the third place finisher, had +54% net image.

Contrast this with images of the runners up in the 7th District. State Senator Bryce Reeves, considered the frontrunner for much of the contest, finished with the highest unfavorability rating we measured at 27%. While he still has a net +25% positive image, Reeves faces a contested primary to retain the newly redrawn Senate district this year.

In the general election, Cao outperformed expectations in his blue district by 4 percentage points, and is now considered a candidate for statewide office. In contrast, Vega performed on par with expectations and lost a tossup seat by 4 points.

Proponents of ranked choice voting cite more positive campaigns and more informed voters as one of the method's key benefits. Some observers credit the usage of RCV in the 2021 Virginia Republican unassembled convention that nominated now-Governor Glenn Youngkin as a key factor in GOP victories.

For lawmakers considering election reforms that give individual voters – not the party establishment – more say over party nominees, a wholesale ban on RCV is shortsighted. While



RCV in general elections is typically unnecessary in our two-party system, it has proven to be a valuable tool in nominating competitive conservatives in the GOP primary.

I urge you to oppose this bill to preserve the opportunity to use ranked choice voting, for all the benefits described above.

Testimony from:  
Josh Daniels<sup>1</sup>

**In OPPOSITION of**

**H 179**  
to prohibit ranked choice voting

Idaho Senate Committee on State Affairs

### **Considerations for administering Ranked Choice Voting elections**

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I write in support of the use of forms of ranked choice voting (RCV) for applicable elections and oppose bill H 179 that would deny cities in Idaho that opportunity. I would like to share my experience in implementing RCV in Utah and why the number of Utah cities choosing to use RCV increased from two in 2019 to 23 in 2021.

A few states are considering legislation to ban and prohibit all forms of ranked choice voting without any differentiation in how RCV can be used. I think this would be a mistake. RCV is a beneficial option for a variety of reasons and legislatures should avoid proactive prohibitions that would reduce future options.

#### **Utah Experience**

In 2019, I was brand new to election administration in my executive role in the Utah County Clerk's office. During that year, after a transition in elected leadership and due to staff vacancies, our election team turned over by about 50%. Additionally, we adopted an entirely new election system (migrating from high levels of in-person voting and polling place balloting using the Dominion system to a vote-by-mail system using ES&S equipment and software), which necessitated training and reworking of all our standard operating procedures. In the midst of all this change, we also agreed to be the first county in the state to administer ranked choice elections for various municipal elections. We were warned by various clerks and election officials that this was risky and that administering ranked choice elections was fraught with complexity that might confuse voters and create operational challenges.

Fortunately, these risks and challenges never materialized and our administration of these elections was as smooth as any other. Let me share some key considerations and lessons we learned after administering these elections:

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<sup>1</sup> Josh Daniels is the former Republican elected Clerk & Auditor for Utah County. Josh administered ranked choice elections for the first time in Utah on behalf of multiple cities in a pilot project for 2019 & 2021. His career has been in public policy and government relations at the local, state, and national levels. He is a former congressional staffer, political campaign director, and policy director at the conservative Libertas Institute think tank. He holds a J.D. from the University of Houston Texas Law Center and a B.A. from Brigham Young University.

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### **Voters understand ranked choice ballots**

One concern we heard was that a ranked choice ballot was inherently more confusing for voters. We tested ballot use by various groups in the community, including some groups with our oldest voters. We learned that the ballot was inherently intuitive despite voters never being exposed to RCV before. We also logged all incoming phone calls from voters during the election period and categorized calls to track voter questions and concerns. What we found was that very few (less than 2%) of all phone calls with questions or concerns were related to RCV specifically.

Additionally, after the election, we surveyed voters who had voted using ranked choice to gather data about their experience. 84% of survey respondents reported that the ballot was “easy to use” and 83% reported that they wanted to continue using RCV or even expand its use to other elections. This was compelling feedback that ran counter to the criticisms and apprehension we had heard about administering RCV elections.

### **Ballot design was simple**

Another concern we heard was that the design of the ballots was more complex, leading to difficulty in administering an election. What we found was that the ballot design, while different, was not significantly more complex to design, program, or administer. We used our existing (ES&S) systems to design and program our ballots and election management system. We had mixed types of election races on a ballot (ranked choice races and plurality races) and scanned and tabulated ballots on existing equipment with no need for any type of segregation or differences in our processes.

### **Election Administration was smooth**

Some have expressed concern that administering an RCV election is more complex than traditional elections. In our experience, this was not true. Nearly every step and part of the process was identical or very similar for an RCV race. We used all our existing certified equipment and systems. The only differences were a slightly different ballot design, an increase in adjudication & ballot review to confirm undervotes (for ballots that did not rank all candidates), and two additional steps at the end related to exporting results, running the instant runoff (IRV) process, and reporting results in a visual chart.

### **2021 Expansion**

As a result of this positive experience, the number of Utah cities where the city council voted to use RCV rose from two in 2019 to 23 in 2021. The positive experience was repeated, which explains why the Sutherland Institute is among organizations supporting the use of RCV in Utah cities.

### **Recommendations**

Our use of RCV was successful and we received a lot of positive feedback from voters who used it. I would recommend states pilot the use of RCV, particularly in municipal elections and presidential primaries. One advantage is that overseas voters can be sure their vote for a particular candidate won't be lost or wasted in the event their chosen candidate drops out of a

race prior to election day. Additionally, RCV helps avoid mere plurality victories in multi-candidate races by ensuring a majority through an instant runoff. For these reasons, states should avoid prohibiting RCV prematurely.

Thank you for your consideration,

Josh Daniels  
Fmr. Utah County Clerk  
Saratoga Springs, UT

~~Josh.Daniels@gmail.com, 801-234-0676~~