House Bill 1273
Senate State and Local Government Committee
March 17th, 2023

Chair Roers and members of the State and Local Government Committee: My name is Barbara Headrick, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of North Dakota in opposition to House Bill 1273**.**

The League of Women Voters supports legislation that allows local jurisdictions to explore alternative electoral methods and supports state election laws that allow for more options at both the state and local levels. House Bill 1273 would prohibit ranked choice and approval voting methods, thereby constricting rather than allowing more options.

Both ranked choice and approval voting methods have been adopted in various states and localities around the country, including the City of Fargo, which uses approval voting in elections for city officials. Ranked choice and approval voting methods allow voters to be more expressive with who they wish to represent them and ensures that the winner in an election will be the most popular candidate.

In ranked choice voting, voters are given the option to rank candidates on the ballot in order of preference, and voters know that if their first choice does not get enough votes to win, their vote automatically counts for their next choice instead. This voting method yields election outcomes that better represent voter preferences. Legal challenges to ranked choice voting have resulted in ranked choice voting being "uniformly upheld in federal courts as a lawful policy choice within the states' constitutional authority to administer elections."[1]

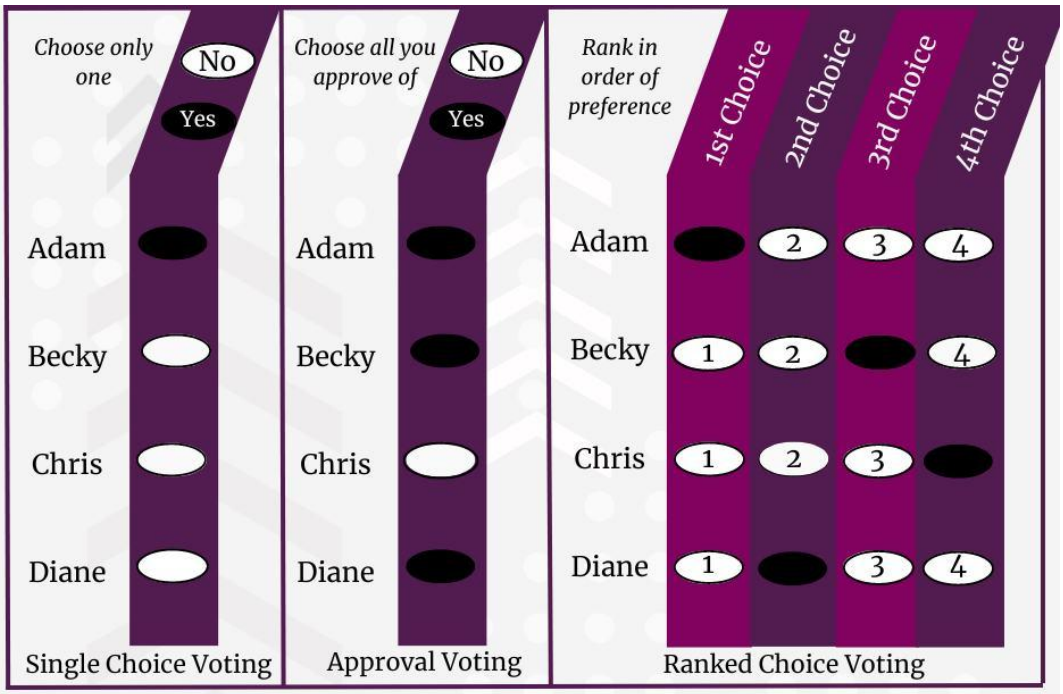
Approval voting, in which voters choose as many candidates as they want, does not dilute the will of the people; instead, it is a representation of the candidates voters would like to represent them. It gives them the freedom to make that choice and vote for all the candidates of which they approve.

In November 2018, Fargo citizens voted 63.52% to 36.48% to amend the city charter to implement approval voting. The League of Women Voters of North Dakota supports the right of Fargo citizens to continue to vote using the method they have deemed most fair, simple, and accurate.

Since HB 1273 would prevent North Dakota citizens from implementing alternative voting methods, the League of Women Voters of North Dakota strongly urges committee members to give HB 1273 a Do Not Pass recommendation.

Testimony submitted by Barbara Headrick, LWVND Board President. nodaklwv@gmail.com

[1]Congressional Research Services. Ranked-Choice Voting: Legal Challenges and Considerations for Congress. 10-12-22. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/LSB/LSB10837



Comparing Voting Methods

Single Choice vs. Approval vs. Ranked Choice