Stan Lockhart
Former Chairman
Utah 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.B. 1273

March 17, 2023

North Dakota Senate Committee on State and Local Government

Dear Chair Roers, Ranking Member Barta, 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.B. 1273, 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](https://ericjwilson.com/ranked-choice-voting-offers-a-promising-path-for-virginia-elections/) on the value he has seen for Republicans in nominating candidates with RCV in his state.
(https://ericjwilson.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](https://sos.ga.gov/page/military-and-overseas-voting) 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](https://wibc.com/89253/rokita-chosen-as-republican-attorney-general-nominee/) 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](https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/725501.pdf) 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/).
(https://www.virginiamercury.com/2021/05/10/virginia-gop-picks-glenn-youngkin-as-its-nominee-governor-heres-what-we-know-about-him/)

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- Why [Canada's Conservative Party has used RCV](https://cpcassets.conservative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/09111707/bb6620b6a719d2b.pdf) 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.

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Former Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party

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