

Ranked choice voting 'local options' bill picks up steam

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ST. PAUL—Though both Minneapolis and St. Paul have now used Ranked Choice Voting twice—with tremendous success—they're not the only Minnesota communities interested in smarter, fairer, more representative elections.

Other reform-minded Minnesota cities want to try RCV for local elections. The bipartisan "local options" bill authored by Rep. Steve Simon (H.F. 367) and Sen. Ann Rest (S.F. 335) would give them the tools and the flexibility to do it.

"If cities want to eliminate separate, low-turnout, unrepresentative primaries—and broaden political participation in the process—they shouldn't need to seek special legislative permission," Simon said.

Yet that's the case under current law. The local options bill frees statutory jurisdictions to use Ranked Choice Voting if they choose, and it allows charter cities to approve RCV by ordinance. It also establishes guidelines to ensure that the next generation of voting equipment is RCV-capable.

Just as importantly, it would give cities that want to make the switch a tried-and-true blueprint for implementing RCV, Simon explained.

Rest called the measure, which has growing support from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, "just common sense. This is simply about getting out of the way and letting cities innovate," she said.

By allowing cities to roll the primary and general elections into one, Rest added, the bill would also eliminate barriers for military and overseas voters. "If we can help cities make it easier for deployed service members to engage in the democracy they're fighting to protect, why wouldn't we?"

H.F. 367 has passed the House Elections Committee and now awaits a full vote in the House; its Senate companion is slated for a hearing soon in the Senate Elections Committee.

For more information, contact FairVote Minnesota Executive Director Jeanne Massey.