

Government Administration and Elections Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-386 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RANKED-CHOICE VOTING IN PARTY CAUCUSES, CONVENTIONS AND PRIMARIES, INCLUDING PRESIDENTIAL

Title: PREFERENCE PRIMARIES, AND IN CERTAIN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

Vote Date: 3/11/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To allow political parties the flexibility of ranked-choice voting.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Specifies the bill's RCV provisions apply to presidential preference primaries starting January 1, 2028, instead of April 4, 2028; changes how a municipality may adopt RCV by making it a municipal referendum vote instead of adoption by charter or ordinance; and makes technical changes

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of State, State of Connecticut:

A version of this bill has been discussed over the years and many express concerns that the system is too complicated. This barrier can be offset with the investment a voter education campaign. The bill does provide optional flexibility rather than mandating RCV statewide I have operational, fiscal, structural, and voter-impact concerns.

Fragmentation Across Municipalities:

Ballot Design and Fusion Voting:

Nonpartisan Boundaries and Party Governance

Minor Party and Future Ballot Access Implications

Fiscal Implications (State and Municipal)

For RCV to be implemented, the program needs:

- * Dedicated funding for statewide elections and minimum requirements for municipal elections
- * Defined treatment of minor party implications
- * Preservation of strict nonpartisan boundaries
- * Expertise to create a strong program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Cathy Osten, Senator, State of Connecticut:

As one of the Co-Chairs of the Governor's Ranked-Choice Voting Working Group in 2024 I recommend that the legislature take on RCV. Connecticut has already taken action to modernize and enhance the voting process and RCV is the next logical step. Proper funding must be in place for all necessary equipment, software, training and education.

Chip Beckett, Independent Party of Connecticut, Chairman:

John Fahan, Independent Party of Connecticut, Treasurer:

We feel that voters "preferences of candidates has not always been recognized" but ranked choice voting will allow people to make choices and allow the candidate that most represents the general population win. The bill includes municipal elections, primaries and general elections. People are registered by party to vote in Connecticut, but open primaries allow perspectives to be offered and explored by all voters. This is a clearer choice for voters to chose which candidates best represents them.

Michael Garman, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, Development

Coordinator:

This bill does not create a mandate but gives interested parties and municipalities the opportunity to chose to use a fairer, more representative system. RCV makes campaigns more issue-focused and civil. Research of RCV elections from Virginia and Santa Fe to San Francisco and Alaska indicate that these campaigns feature more constructive debate on the issues. RCV has a proven track record of increasing voter turnout and engagement. Many voters choose not to vote because they are discouraged by the negativity of our politics.

Rachael Huchinson, FairVote Action, Senior Policy Analyst:

FairVote Action supports giving cities and towns in Connecticut the option to use ranked choice voting in local elections, primaries and federal elections. The bill helps political parties nominate more consistently viable candidates, offers voters in primaries and municipal elections more choices. Promotes positive issues and creates a more level playing field for women candidates and candidates of color. The bill provides municipalities and parties flexibility to chose leaders who best represent but not as a mandate. Included in our testimony are statistics from various states and their use of the system.

Anna Kellar, Rank the Vote, National Organizing Director:

As a national nonpartisan organization, we see RCV as a proven, simple and effective way to ensure elections reflect the will of the people. Allowing voters to rank candidates reduces strategic voting, leads to more positive campaigning, and appeals to a wider range of voters. RCV in primary elections is beneficial because it allows voters to express their true preference before Election Day. Alaska, Maine, Hawaii, Kansas, Nevada and Wyoming have already demonstrated that RCV primaries are more efficient, inclusive and reprehensive.

David McGuire, ACLU, Executive Director:

The United States is witnessing efforts to restrict ballot access, dilute the power of black and brown communities and undermine the foundations of democracy. This is a pivotal moment for our voting rights. The ACLU believes the right to vote must be protected and strengthened and that every vote is meaningful. Ranked-choice voting is an essential part of promoting racial justice and leads to more candidates of color on the ballot and stronger representation in office. A study of RCV elections since 2004 shows that Black and Brown candidates grew their totals higher than winning white candidates benefiting from the RCV voting process. RepresentWomen's 2024 found that RCV opens doors for Black women by eliminating split votes and making nontraditional candidates viable. Every racial and ethnic group studied increased when multiple members of that group were on the ballot. Connecticut can act to strengthen communities of color at a time when they are being targeted by efforts to weaken their political voice at the federal level.

Ann Reed, League of Women Voters, Vice President for Advocacy:

As a member of the Governor's Ranked Choice Voting Working Group, I learned a great deal and recommend RCV. RCV would incentivize candidates to engage with all voters, foster healthier dialogued and minimize divisive campaigning and rhetoric. Municipalities have the option to adopt RCV.

Henry Rowland, Veterans for All Voters, State Leader:

Our goal is to advance RCV legislation enabling Connecticut political parties and municipalities the option to use RCV. Veterans are passionate about electoral reforms due to our unique perspective. The current system divides voters, including veterans into two parties serving private interest rather than the public goods. We aim to break this cycle and envision competitive American democracy where citizens are excited to participate. We dedicate ourselves to defending the Constitution, yet we are witnessing struggles with peaceful transfers of power and a government that seems disconnected from the founding principles of this country. Almost half of veterans do not identify as Democrats or Republicans and the largest group is unaffiliated who are unable to participate in primaries, I am left with only a few choices during most elections. Ranked choice voting removes these issues and allows voters to express their preference no matter what party.

Gale Weinstein, Weston:

As a former First Selectman I know the importance of fair election systems and the realities of administering them. The bill is a careful and balanced approach to modernizing our election framework while respecting local control, party governance and administrative clarity. It does not mandate ranked choice voting statewide and permits political parties to adopt ranked choice voting in caucuses, conventions, primaries and presidential primaries under their own rules. This is a structural reform not a partisan one. Its purpose is to accurately capture voter intent in multi-candidate contest and encourage broader engagement.

The following Mayors submitted testimony in support of the bill:

Swarnjit Singh, Mayor, City of Norwich:

As a businessman, a community leader, a husband and father I support ranked choice voting as a practical improvement to how we measure voter preference especially with several qualified candidates. Voters are able to express more than a single choice and it encourages

candidates to seek broader support. The bill is well structured for Connecticut because it expands flexibility and does not impose a one-size-fits-all model.

Barbara C. Smyth, Mayor, City of Norwalk:

When I ran for Mayor I promised clearer communications with residents, sharing the tradeoffs, explaining decisions and building trust and ranked-choice voting is a good system. It gives voters a fuller way to express their preferences, reduces the incentives for negative, divisive campaigning and rewards candidates who can build a broader support. The drafting respects how election administration works and creates an optional framework that allows political parties to adopt ranked choice voting in primaries, conventions, caucuses, presidential primaries while establishing statewide standards for tabulation, tie resolution, and ballot design.

Allan Smith, Mayor, Town of Rocky Hill:

Ranked-choice voting gives voters a way to express their preferences and reduces the spoiler dynamic in a crowded field. It encourages candidates compete for second choice and rewards constructive campaigning that discourage polarizing tactics. I appreciate that it is not a mandate and respects party autonomy. The effective dates are sensible and allow adequate time for planning, training, public education and clear written procedures.

Paula Bacolini, Make Voting Easy-CT, Founder:

I have written testimony for several years on RCV because it provides more choice to voters and reduces nasty political attacks. I support this legislation because it provides the SOTS time to implement and the budget for ballots and the budget to educate the public. It should be implemented for the municipal elections in 2029.

Suzanne Barber, Hebron:

I fully support working together to protect inalienable rights to all individuals such as voting rights. The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters says that an effective democracy depends on collaborative, accountable leadership. RCV empowers voters to vote honestly for the candidates they support, encourages positive campaigning, improves voter turnout, satisfaction, engagement and helps level the playing field for women, BIPOC, and first-time candidates. Polling shows that RCV voters see the system as generally easy to understand with clear instructions.

Alden Okoh-Aduako, Student:

I talk with other students and hear a tune of exhaustions. Young people feel disconnected from democracy that see campaigns between candidates as not representing them and the current system does not give them a voice. RCV offers a way to make our elections fairer and restore engagement in democracy. Voters are often forced to vote for what they feel is a lesser evil, but RCV widens the pool of options for voters, makes it more civil, encourages policy campaigns, and no more negative campaigning.

Brenden Stremmler, Student, New Haven:

In 2025 only 36.4% of voters showed up in local elections. We must see what we can do to increase engagement in our local governments. Disengagement in politics is not the fault of voters but a response to a system that makes people particularly young people and those of lower socioeconomic status feel their voices do not matter. Many of my fellow students and friends feel their voices are not heard in elections especially when forced to choose the lesser

of two evils. Under the current system plurality voting candidates win without a majority. RCV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. This empowers voters to support their first choice. RCV has been shown to increase voter engagement and many other New England states have adopted it in some municipalities and in Maine statewide. Connecticut should authorize municipalities and parties to adopt RCV voluntarily and selectively as their constituents see fit.

Victor Marolda, East Lyme:

An effective democracy depends on collaborative, accountable leadership and under our current system a candidate can win with less with 50%. Connecticut's "pick one" voting system allows candidates to win without majority support. Ranked Choice voting allows voters to rank in order of preference. If a candidate receives more than 50% of first choice votes they win. If no candidate reaches a majority the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and those ballots now count for their next choice. This continues until a candidate earns majority support ensuring the winner reflects the will of the majority. This is not a mandate but gives political parties the option to use RCV in party elections, primaries, caucuses and party conventions.

Eliza Macaluso, Student:

Ranked Choice Voting gives political parties and municipalities the option to adopt RCV but is not mandated. Connecticut voters value fair, accessible elections with thoughtful modernization. Over recent years Connecticut approved early voting, the constitutional change that allows no-excuse absentee voting and our public financing system is a national example. RCV is the natural step that give voters more choice, ensure elections outcomes reflect broad support and fits our steady approach to strengthening democracy.

Patricia Reardon, Physician & Surgeon:

RCV is consistent with Connecticut's steady approach to strengthening democracy. Allowing voters to rank their preferences reduces the risk of vote splitting and ensures winner have the strongest possible supports. The proposal is cautious and flexible and allows parties and municipalities to choose to opt-in respecting local decisions while giving communities and parties a practical tool to modernize elections.

Suzanne Solensky, Stratford:

This represents a step forward in voting reform that gives voters more input into who gets elected and as a result leads to outcomes reflect the overall population. New York City used RCV for the first time in 2021 when citizens elected the second only Black mayor as well as the most ethnically, racially and diverse city council ever. Minority representatives increased from 53% to 64% and women made up a majority of the council. Ranked choice voting ensures that winning candidates will represent the population and appeals to the voters. As of February 2026 48, jurisdictions, states, cities and towns, use RCV including Alaska and Maine. I benefited in 2024 from early voting and no excuse absentee voting. RCV has the promise of increased civic participation.

John Board:

RCV is a modern, fair and voter-empowering way to run elections that give more choices and voices in our democratic process RCV advances transparency, accountability, problem-solving and healthy electoral competition.

Vivian Zoe, LWV of Southeastern Ct, Board Member:

Luke Williams, Oak Tree Development, Manager:

John Whaley, CT4ALL, Teacher:

Caroline Webster, Canaan:

The proposal is not a mandate but allows political parties and municipalities the option to adopt RCV for certain elections. This state has a strong track record for responsible election upgrades and voters have backed them. Our public financing systems has been a national example and RCV is a natural next step that gives voters more choice and helps ensure elections reflect broad majority support. RCV reduces the risk of vote splitting, encourages campaigns to be more constructive and is intentionally cautious and flexible. As the land of steady habits this reform reflects our shared values of fairness, transparency, and representation as a leader in strengthening democracy.

The following residents submitted testimony:

Patricia McKinley, Cheshire

Neil Hornish, Suffield

Annie Hornish, Suffield

Ronny Kaplan, Stamford

Peter Woermann, New Fairfield

Jane Berger Herschlag, Danbury

Alexander Brandorff, New Milford

Christina Casati, Greenwich

Alida Cella, Wallingford

Baird Collins, Marlborough

Nicki Colodny, Guilford

Gene DeJoannis, Manchester

Eke Theresa, Milford

Melinda Fields, Willimantic

Sarah Gannon, New Fairfield

Patricia Gilbert, Cromwell

Robert Gilbert, Cromwell

Lawrence Grasso Ashford

Joseph Gulas, Derby

Barbara Haines, Essex

Harold Hille, Riverside

Jenny Hille, Riverside

Randolph Hogan, North Haven

Marietta Homayonpour, Bethel

Kaplan Ronny, Stamford

David Keeton, Westport

Wendy Kolanz, Meriden

Melissa Lennon, Preston

Joyce Lynch, Wallingford

Doug Miller, Redding

Bruce Misfeldt, Stamford

Joan Prichard, Hartford

Peter Rowland, Burlington

Rebecca Schilling, Granby

Lawrence Schwartz, Norwalk

Isa Olsen, Westbrook
Wendy Cudmore, Fairfield
Kristina Spadone, Fairfield
Karen Thorsen, Easton
John Waxman, Westport
Caroline Webster, Canaan
Kate Wessling, Higganum
Kevin Walsh, Madison

The following also submitted testimony supporting the bill:

Sandra Janik
Maryfrances Metrick
Stephen Kobasa
John Mertens
Laura Lynch
Peter Hermann
Karen Stimson
Tricia George
Janet Stone McGuigan
Jean Miller
Marlene Tandler
Megan Moore
Joy Bonitz
Tricia George
Lynne Bonnett
Kathleen Fay
Kevin Browdler
Laura Copeland
Danielle Chesebrough
Jeffery Culp
Jonathan Choate
Rita Deglau
Celeste Cobb

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Anne Manusky, National Director, Connecticut Republican Assembly:

We are an organization totaling over 500 Republicans and conservatives who stand firm in our principles and rights under the US Constitution. The National Federation of Republican Assemblies our charter organization added a 14th principle in a resolution to our 2025 Annual Convention. We believe that free and fair elections are essential to preserve against fraudulent ballots from being submitted to counted. We advocate for using hand-marked certifiable paper ballots counted at the precinct level, requiring government-issued photo ID, for cleaning voter rolls regularly and allowing only U.S. citizens to vote. Ranked choice voting is a scheme to disconnect elections from issues to allow candidates with marginal support to win. It obscures true debates and issue-driven dialogs among candidates and eliminates genuine binary choices.

Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc:

Town Clerks support election security, transparency and integrity, we take our responsibilities seriously to safeguard records, administer election-related duties and ensure all voters have confidence in the electoral process. We appreciate efforts to improve election administration but have concerns with implementing a significant change to Connecticut's election laws at this time. We have worked diligently to implement numerous changes, including early voting, new voting tabulators, expanding absentee voting and a statewide election management system utilized by Registrars of Voters, Town Clerks and election workers. Each of these has required extensive training, voter education and procedural updates. Adopting ranked-choice voting would represent a major structural change. Connecticut's election system is administered locally by 169 separate towns and cities and coordinating the collection, aggregation and reporting from all municipalities could present operational and logistical challenges particularly in accurate results and timely delivery. We remain committed to ensure that Connecticut's elections remain safe, secure, transparent and accurate.

Lisa Amatruda, Republican Registrar of Voters, Woodbury:

RCV is presented as a modernization effort but is a challenge at a time when elections are already undergoing major transitions. RCV complicates the voting process, threatens timely and transparent results and would strain local elections offices and increase the risk of errors. Connecticut should pause before introducing another major shift in election procedures.

Beth Lundy, Glastonbury Registers of Voters:

This is a departure from the principal One-Voter, One Vote. It is unnecessary because we already have a robust electoral process, and it adds an unnecessary step to the voting process. There are major administrative challenges with specialized equipment and longer counts.

Michele May, CT Registrar of Voters:

As a certified Connecticut Registrar of voters, I view ranked-choice as complicated, unnecessary and undermines the majority-rule elections our republic was built on. This is a step backward that favors insiders, confuses voters and erodes trust in self-government. RCV causes voter confusion, errors, false majorities. higher rejection rates for flawed ballots and tabulation can take days or weeks. The 2025 Bipartisan Policy Center reports higher implementation costs, training burdens and temporary drops in public confidence. Connecticut towns should not bear extra costs because Hartford wants to experiment. Stick with the time-tested system: one person, one clear vote, majority wins.

Tom Pugliese, Registrar of Voters, Rocky Hill:

This bill if passed would necessitate more time to be committed to unproductive labor and demand more unnecessary and uncompensated work to be completed by the registrar of voters. This would only confuse people and is a failing concept and serves to remove the voters from the election process.

Jeffery Rogers, Registrar of Voters, Montville:

At its core elections should be simple, transparent and easily understood. Ranked Choice Voting undermines these principals while its proponents claim fairness and majority support in reality it complicates elections and can distort the electorate. RCV can result in a candidate winning who is not the first choice of most voters. The system reduces transparency and is confusing for voters. It can open the door to strategi manipulation where political operatives

can game the system by encouraging certain rankings designed to eliminate stronger opponents in early rounds. Connecticut voters deserve an election system that is clear, fair and easy to audit.

Peter Gostin, Registrar of Voters, New Britain:

In our elected history candidates have been elected by a plurality of votes. Ranked-Choice Voting will require a majority of votes to be declared a winner. The only way to create that majority is by removing ballots from the final tally. RCV creates a false majority, not a true majority. This is not the American principals of "one-person, one-vote." It threatens the fast and accurate ballot counting by complicating delayed results. A total of 16 states have banned RCV with 4 rejecting RCV on election day in 2024. This is a bad solution in search of a problem.

Pamela Greenhaigh, Registrar of Voters, Killingly:

During my time I have seen the lack of voter education on how voting works. Ranked-choice-voting would lead to confusion both for the electors as well as the election administration. The system could potentially result in a candidate winning an election without the most votes cast. Which is the very definition of a democratic election.

Harry Roth, Stop Ranked-Choice Voting Coalition, Project Manager:

In 2024 Attorney General William Tong issued a formal opinion on Ranked Choice Voting: " Connecticut cannot implement it in violation of the state constitution. Our state had never used ranked-choice voting; our constitution does not mention it; and I found no evidence that the framers of our constitution intended to authorize it."

Beyond the constitutional issues Connecticut should not allow its municipalities to experiment with that a system resulted in weeks-long delays, eliminated ballots, longer lines and voter confusion. The voters in Oregon, Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, Montana and Nevada rejected measures related to ranked-choice voting in 2024. Eighteen states have banned ranked-choice voting since 2022.

The following also submitted testimony in opposition:

Marcella Kurowski K
elly Hemmeler
Phil Marasco
Anna Hara
Michael Nintean
Brenda Hamilton
Selina Rifkin
Jason Guidone
Dominic Rapini
Charles Baugh
John Pepper
Peter Wrampe
Mike Santangelo
Ron Yeomans
Mary Ann Turner
Paul Zator
Jennifer Sparks
Ray Zatorski

Jerry Cincotta
Phillip Johnson
Alton Blodgett Susan
Susan Hull
Jennifer Damon
Ellen Jacob
Linda Dalessio
Cynthia Dehner
Janet Dahlberg
Alan Colombie
Christina
Mona Colwel

There were also 8 Anonymous that submitted testimony in opposition.

Submitted Informational Testimony:

Chris Hughes, Senior Director of Policy, Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center:

Rosemary Blizzard, Executive Director, Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center:

RCVRC is ready to assist Connecticut with any RCV voting implementation.

Voting Equipment:

All 169 municipalities have ES&S equipment that is capable of conducting RCV elections.

Implementation Costs:

There tend to be two big costs, voting equipment and voter education. Connecticut already has the equipment capable of conducting RCV elections and voters needing information can be done in voter education campaigns. RCVRC recommends a jurisdiction budget of \$2-3 per voter for a high-quality RCV education campaign. We can provide input on the test to ensure that it follows best practices and makes both state and local implementation strait forward.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 30 2026