

BRATTLEBORO TOWN CLERK

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To the members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations:

Good morning. My name is Hilary Francis and I am the Brattleboro Town Clerk, and a member of the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Association's Legislative Committee. I am pleased to have been invited to be here today.

Prior to taking on the duties of a Vermont Town Clerk, I worked for a non-profit organization in Maine that was integral in getting Rank Choice Voting passed for the Portland, Maine Mayoral race. Our organization collected petition signatures to get this article on the ballot, created materials for the Municipal Clerks, and conducted major educational events to ensure that voters understood this new-to-them method of voting.

I provide this background material to highlight that as I speak with you today, I am in no means advocating against Rank Choice Voting. I do, however, feel that if we are going to implement this new-to-Vermonters style of voting, we need to be thoughtful and methodical with the rollout of it.

From my experience both with the Maine Non-Profit Organization, as well as six plus years as a Vermont Town Clerk, we need to plan for an educational campaign to make sure Clerks, Poll Workers, and Voters are well informed and confident with these changes. The Secretary of State's office Election Division needs time to develop procedures for this new way of voting.

One of the best ways to reach voters is by including informational inserts with their absentee ballots and providing handouts and posted materials at the polls themselves, for all elections between now and the launch of RCV. If we aim to launch RCV for the March 2024 Presidential Primary, there will be zero elections where we can conduct this type of educational campaign. By pushing the launch of RCV out to the March 2028 Presidential Primary election, that will provide ample time for Clerks and Poll Workers to learn the new procedures, and to educate voters at the following elections:

- March 2024
- August 2024
- November 2024
- March 2025
- March 2026
- August 2026
- November 2026
- March 2027

Between Election Day education, press releases, social media posts, any additional mailings that the SOS may send or additional press events that may be held, my hope is that voters will not

only know that this change is coming, but will wholeheartedly understand and embrace the changes that aim towards improving our democratic process of voting.

The VMCTA does not speak in favor of or opposed to implementing RCV. We do however, strongly advocate that the timeline allow for education across everyone impacted by these changes, and we support a March 2028 launch date.

I am happy to answer questions and I will submit my statement in writing to your Committee Assistant.

Thank you!