2019BCDCC-014-190814-SUB – GOVT – SUPPORT RANKED CHOICE VOTING TO ENSURE MORE COMPETITIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS

Whereas many elections are not competitive. More than 85% of U.S. House districts are completely safe for the incumbent party, and only 4% were true toss-ups in 2016, so that millions of Americans are perpetually represented by politicians they oppose, with little hope of voting them out;

Whereas Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), aka instant runoff voting, is a method of voting designed for elections with three or more candidates, such as primaries;

Whereas RCV is defined for single-winner races as follows: Instead of voting for just one candidate in a slate, voters rank the candidates in order of preference. If no candidate wins a majority of first-choice votes, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated, and the ballots cast for that candidate are redistributed to the other candidates based on those voters' second choices, and votes are retallied. This process repeats itself until one candidate wins a majority of votes;

Whereas the benefits of RCV include ensuring that the final winner has received a majority of votes. Voters who do not see their first choice elected may at least see their second or third choice elected;

Whereas RCV also potentially saves money in elections by replacing run-off elections, and potentially can mitigate the impact of excess money in political campaigns;

Whereas RCV has been shown to encourage more civil campaigns, by discouraging negative campaigning, and by giving voters the freedom to vote honestly for the candidates they like best, knowing their votes will not be thrown away;

Whereas RCV has the potential to open up America's two-party system to more political choice and competition, encouraging more voter turnout, and thereby restoring faith in our democracy;

Whereas implementing RCV would involve investments in education of voters on how RCV works, and updating voting equipment. RCV would lead voters to do more homework on the candidates, to the ultimate benefit of the electoral process;

Whereas municipalities in seven states—California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New Mexico—have used RCV in municipal elections, and Maine, has used RCV in state and federal elections, and the Oscars, Australia, and Ireland have used RCV for years;

Whereas HB1722 and SB 5708, both RCV bills introduced to the Washington State legislature early in 2019, languish in committee;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Benton County Democrats urge our county legislative delegation to urge the Benton County Auditor to adopt RCV for local and county elections, consistent with state law, and

Be it finally resolved that the Benton County Democrats urge our state legislative delegations to move to act on the RCV bills HB1722 and SB5708, to enact RCV for local, state and Congressional elections in Washington State, following the example of the State of Maine, in time for the 2020 elections.

References:

https://ballotpedia.org/Ranked-choice_voting_(RCV)

https://www.fairvote.org/rcv#how_rcv_works

https://apps.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=1722&Year=2019&Initiative=false

https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2019/07/ranked-choice-voting-and-simple-caucusing-could-so.html

---

Submitted to the Benton County Democratic Central Committee by the Resolutions Committee August 4, 2019.

Passed by the Benton County Democratic Central Committee August 14, 2019.