

To the members of the Governor's Ranked Choice Voting Working Group,

My name is Ethan Rodriguez-Torrent. I am writing to express my support for ranked choice voting ("RCV"), and my hope that your Working Group will make specific recommendations for its implementation in Connecticut, including any changes that need to be made to the CT constitution to allow RCV on the state level.

Our current "first past the post" system offers an *extremely* limited way for voters to express their preferences. It does the voters a disservice by making a vote for a third party equivalent to "throwing away" our ballots. And it does the parties themselves a disservice, too: victory at the polls tells a candidate very little about whether his or her platform resonated with voters, particularly when the only alternative was a very bad one.

In extreme but critical situations, both voter and party can experience the worst possible outcome, when enough "thrown away" ballots are enough to change the outcome of the election. This is particularly painful when the people voting third party unwittingly undermine their second-choice candidate -- like the left-leaning voters in Florida who chose Ralph Nader in 2000 and ended up handing the presidency to Bush instead.

Voter participation has been shown to increase where RCV is implemented. That doesn't surprise me at all: right now, the overwhelming majority of people I know will use a phrase like "the lesser of two evils" when asked how they intend to vote. I want to see elections where parties bear the burden of fielding candidates that appeal to voters, and then making a case for why those candidates are up to the job -- instead of spending all their time convincing us that the other guy is worse.

There is a lot more to be done before voters can enjoy real choice and meaningful participation in the political process -- for example, local party apparatuses need to become much more transparent and inclusive in their nominating processes. This will never happen until the ossified major parties (Republicans and Democrats) find themselves faced with a real challenge from a viable third party candidate.

Our elected representatives should have to earn our votes -- not just show that the alternative is untenable. RCV will lay the groundwork to make that possible.

Sincerely,

Ethan Rodriguez-Torrent
New Haven, CT