

**GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING ON RANKED CHOICE VOTING, MARCH 6, 2023**

S.B. 389

**TESTIMONY OF MIKE URGO IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 389 – A BI-PARTISAN BILL
RELATING TO USE OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN PRESIDENTIAL
PRIMARIES, FEDERAL ELECTIONS TO THE U.S. CONGRESS & A MUNICIPAL
OPTION**

March 6, 2023

To: Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Blumenthal, Vice Chairs Sen. Slap and Rep. Morrin Bello, Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco, Distinguished Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee

From: Mike Uργο, Managing Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters. Former First Selectman, North Stonington, CT

Honorable members.

I would like to express my passionate support for Ranked Choice Voting and bill S.B 389. To those of you I know, along with the rest of you who are working on this incredibly important topic, I thank you for your valuable service. My name is Mike Uργο. I've recently completed two terms as the First Selectman in North Stonington, and I have seen first-hand the need for Ranked Choice Voting. I also currently serve as the Managing Director of The Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, who also enthusiastically supports this bill. Please allow me to explain my personal reasons for asking for your support.

We have a problem in Connecticut with vacancies on our ballots during election time. Look no further than the [State's website](#) at all of the municipal ballots to see how many empty slots there have been over the last couple of years. In some cases, people are serving multiple public service positions in towns. This is not because people are unwilling to serve. Rather it results from the fact, our system does not encourage participation. Many people in every Connecticut community would love to step up and help on a board or commission in their community, were it not for the process in which they need to endure.

When I decided to run for public office, I was told the easiest way to run is to affiliate myself with a party. Like the many unaffiliated voters in Connecticut, I was not interested in joining a party because I personally felt there was too much divisiveness associated with party politics. This nearly kept me from getting involved. Ultimately, I chose to remain unaffiliated; however, it

quickly became obvious that in order to have the best chance of winning, I needed party support for my run. I was fortunate to receive that support and thus served two terms. Many people are unwilling to go through this process to simply serve their town in a volunteer role.

During my two terms in office, I witnessed in many communities people come and go on various boards and commissions. Most times when people left, they felt frustrated by party politics and the logjam that occurs when a small group of people have the power to control things. Talented, capable, dedicated people who could have helped for many more years, simply disappeared from public service.

Bill S.B. 389 will benefit ALL OF US. We all need qualified, willing, intelligent people to step up as public servants, but right now our system is discouraging for the average citizen. Ranked Choice Voting begins to fix this problem. It enables a capable, committed citizen to run for office and have a real shot at election regardless of race, nationality, creed, religion, ethnicity, sex, or family status. It levels the playing field for people and has proven to produce smart and qualified candidates. While it is true that we currently have minority representation rules, this does not simplify the onerous process one has to follow in order to run for office and have a chance at being elected.

For those who feel RCV is a difficult or confusing process, numerous polls and other hard data show voters find RCV easy and intuitive. The Utah Republican Party surveyed delegates and 72% not only preferred ranked choice voting, but wanted to use it again to nominate candidates. Exit polls and surveys consistently show that voters overwhelmingly report a strong understanding of RCV. Little to no evidence of challenges in difficulty in using RCV were found among racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups. Rates of ballot error in RCV are low and no greater than in any other form of voting. Multiple polls show a majority of voters rank at least two to three candidates (83% in NYC and 87% in Minneapolis, 65% in Maine). Ranked choice voting yields a lower error rate of voided ballots than single-choice ballots.

A Quinnipiac poll, released Aug. 31, found that 69% of Democrats and 69% of Republicans believe that “the nation’s democracy is in danger of collapse.” We cannot afford to underestimate the value of measures that can bolster fairness and representation in elections at this moment in our nation’s history. RCV returns electoral choice and power to the voters where it belongs. RCV helps to restore trust and confidence in our institutions. Multiple polls show that RCV elections result in more positive campaigning, an impact that bolsters faith in our governing institutions. Now is the time to begin implementation of RCV.

In closing, I was both disgusted and angry on January 6th, 2021. Like most Americans, it hurt me to see what we had been reduced to as a country. We must do whatever we can to protect our democracy. It’s critical that we change the trajectory of our political discourse. Ranked Choice

Voting paves the way for this new and positive approach to politics. While this bill as written will not immediately address all elections in the state with Ranked Choice Voting, it offers a strong start.

Thank you,
Mike Urgo