

Chairman Esau and Members of the Committee,

I am a Kansas resident living in Overland Park. I first moved to Kansas in 2008 and have been living in Johnson County for 7 of the last 9 years. I am writing this testimony in support of Kansas adopting ranked choice voting with multi-winner districts for its elections, because I sincerely believe that ending our winner-take-all system of elections will greatly improve our government and therefore our state.

I am hoping today's testimony has already provided plenty of examples demonstrating the flaws of winner-take-all elections. To recap a few of them, our current elections are vulnerable to gerrymandering, they produce legislatures that over-represent the majority party, and they do not do a good job of supporting elections with more than two candidates. These flaws are present regardless of which party is in power, and can be seen all across the country.

Ranked choice voting fixes many of these flaws. Multi-winner districts give opposition voters an opportunity to be represented. Imagine if Kansas House districts were combined into 25 five-member districts. In that scenario, I'd expect new conservative and liberal representatives to be elected from areas that are currently single-party, like Southwest Kansas and Kansas City. Opposition voices are not often heard from these areas at the state level, but they deserve a seat at the table as much as anyone else.

Kansas voters deserve something better than winner-take-all. Voters deserve a system that supports more than two options. We deserve a system that is less vulnerable to how district lines are drawn on a map. We deserve a system that does not force us to register with the majority party just to have a say in who represents us. We deserve a system that instead gives the opposition their fair share of seats at the table.

Political parties and candidates deserve a better system, too. Parties deserve a system that does not require divisive and expensive primary elections to choose their candidates. Candidates deserve a system that does not punish them for agreeing with their opponents. Candidates deserve a system that instead rewards collaboration and finding common ground.

I believe the ranked choice voting will deliver this system. I hope the committee agrees and proceeds to take the necessary measures to enable ranked choice voting with multi-winner districts in Kansas elections. If the committee decides that ranked choice voting is not right for Kansas, then I hope that they will at least recognize that our current winner-take-all system is grossly inadequate and will continue to search for the election reform our state needs.

Thank you,

Richard Pund

Overland Park, KS