

# The Voter Choice Act

## Senator Michael Bennet, Senator Angus King, and Congressman Dean Phillips

**The Problem:** America's electoral system rewards partisanship, distorts public representation, and discourages political competition. Today in most U.S. elections, a candidate can win with far less than a majority of all votes cast. Moreover, voters for third parties can inadvertently help elect candidates with views diametrically opposed to their own. All of this warps democratic representation, discourages political competition, and demands innovative reform.

**The Proposal:** We should support local and state governments that *choose* to transition to a ranked choice voting (RCV) model for elections (also known as "instant runoff" in a single-winner race and "single transferable vote" in multi-winner races).

**What is Ranked Choice Voting?** Instead of voting for a single candidate, RCV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. In races where there can be only one winner, if no candidate earns a majority outright based on first choices, the lowest vote-getter is eliminated. Voters for the eliminated candidate then have their ballot count for their next choice. The process repeats until one candidate earns a majority. RCV also works in races with more than one winner (you can learn more about how this process works [here](#)).

To date, Alaska and Maine have adopted RCV for all federal elections, while states like Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina have embraced RCV to allow overseas and military voters to participate in runoff elections. Local governments in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, and Utah have also adopted some form of RCV for municipal elections.

### Why Ranked Choice Voting?

- *RCV gives voters more choices.* RCV lets voters support their first choice without inadvertently electing their worst choice, increasing competition without the risk of spoilers.
- *RCV discourages negative campaigning.* RCV rewards candidates who are the second choice for some of their opponents' supporters, reducing the incentive for slash-and-burn politics.
- *RCV rewards consensus views.* By requiring the winner to receive majority support, RCV rewards candidates who appeal beyond their "base" to a broader cross-section of voters.
- *RCV reduces cost.* RCV eliminates the need for costly runoff elections.

**The Voter Choice Act:** This bill authorizes \$40 million in federal grants to support local and state governments that *choose* to transition to RCV. Grants would support up to 50 percent of the cost for local and state governments to transition to RCV, including through the purchase of voting equipment and tabulation software, appropriate ballot design, educational materials, and voter outreach.