



## STATE OF KANSAS

February 27, 2025

### **Testimony on SB6 (Oral Neutral)**

House Elections Committee  
Submitted: February 20, 2025

Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 6 prohibiting rank choice voting (RCV) in Kansas elections.

### **General Background:**

The purpose of RCV is to ensure that if no candidate receives more than 50% of the initial vote, then the eventual prevailing candidate is the consensus choice of a majority of the voters. It has the same GOAL as run-off elections.

Ranked-choice voting (RCV) is an electoral system in which voters rank candidates in order of preference instead of selecting just one. If no candidate wins a majority (more than 50%) of first-choice votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Voters who selected the eliminated candidate have their votes redistributed to their next choice. This process continues until one candidate secures a majority.

### **Other States:**

Currently, two states and about 50 municipalities employ some variant of RCV. These cities either independently run their own elections or are operating under state law allowing RCV programs. About six states use RCV only for their UOCAVA (military and overseas) voters in the event of a runoff election.

### **Kansas:**

In 1861, Kansas enacted what is now KSA 25-702 and mandated plurality voting for “all elections for the choice of any officer . . .” in Kansas. That is, one vote per office and the candidate with the most votes wins. Current law, therefore, would seem to already prohibit the use of rank choice voting in Kansas.

Currently no Kansas county has the capability to conduct a RCV election for itself or any subordinate municipality.

### **Secretary’s Observations:**

The Secretary does not, however, believe SB6 is redundant.

First, it ensures there is no potential for a novel interpretation of KSA 25-702.

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Second, it clearly bars municipalities from attempting to employ an expansive application of home rule to use rank choice voting in a city election. Counties are prohibited from exempting themselves from election laws (KSA 19-101a(a)(6))

There are several valid reasons to oppose adopting RCV.

First, after 164 years, the Kansas public is accustomed to plurality voting and without strong grassroots advocacy or public demand, policymakers should be reluctant to pursue such a fundamental change to voting procedures.

Second, RCV is more complex for voters to understand, and the process can confuse and discourage voters from ranking every candidate, resulting in voter exhaustion, creating skewed results. Indeed, a recent study<sup>i</sup> from the Harvard Kennedy School warns RCV could have unintended negative effects on minority communities' representation and influence.

Third, implementing RCV would require significant and expensive changes to Kansas' voting infrastructure, including modifications to voting machines, ballot design, and tabulation systems; changes to the post-election audit and recount procedures; as well as costs associated with voter education.

Sincerely,

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<sup>i</sup> <https://ash.harvard.edu/articles/does-ranked-choice-voting-create-barriers-for-minority-voters/>