

Date: 20 February 2025
Bill number: SB 6
Disposition: Opponent
Name of conferee: Amber Schmidt
On Behalf of: Self - Private Citizen

Chairman Proctor and Members of the Committee,

I value this committee's time and appreciate your consideration of my opinion on this matter. I have outlined my justification for opposition to this bill below.

“Every time I hear it, I’m confused,” said Sen. Mike Thompson, chairman of the Senate federal and state affairs committee, at the Monday hearing.¹

I am concerned that this senate committee would recommend a bill to be passed when they are confused as to its contents or application. I am confident this committee is competent and will ensure they understand what they are proposing to ban. Just in case, I have provided a brief example of ranked-choice voting.

WHAT IS RANKED-CHOICE VOTING: I used to be confused about what ranked-choice voting meant. I was worried **my vote would get trashed, or would mean less**. But that is not the case! In fact, it was the opposite. A ranked-choice vote would ensure my voice is heard no matter what candidate wins! If you are not familiar, I have provided a brief example of what ranked-choice voting is below.

It is the same concept as those annoying surveys we all are asked to take. The ones that ask “On a scale of 1-5, how did we do today?” The biggest difference is that in ranked-choice voting you **cannot** choose the same value for multiple options (candidates). Each voter assigns a value to each available candidate on this ‘scale’ - a rank! If there are five candidates, the scale is 1 to 5, and so on. In this example, let’s assign one (1) as the “first choice” , and five (5) as the “last choice”.

| | | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Candidate: | A | B | C | D | E |
| Rank: | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 |

Everyone casts their ballots in this manner, and can assign their “first” through “last” choices. Then all the ballots are counted as normal, using the “first” candidate. If the total votes for a single candidate reach the majority needed, the election is concluded and the winner declared. If there is not a majority vote for one candidate, then the more complicated “run-offs” begin. **But here’s the best part!! Since our ballots list our “next best” choice, that is who our vote**

¹ <https://kansasreflector.com/2025/01/28/out-of-state-advocates-support-kansas-ranked-choice-voting-ban/>

goes to next! It allows for each voter's preferences to be maintained even when their first choice is not the most popular choice!

MAIN POINT:

Ranked-choice voting bolsters Kansans' voices, which I presume this committee would agree is the sole intent and purpose of voting, and should be the priority. A ban enacted to prevent this voting method from developing in Kansas would be harmful to the intent of voting and the will of this voter. **A ranked-choice vote would ensure my voice is heard no matter what candidate wins!**

JUSTIFICATION OF OPPOSITION:

A ban on ranked-choice voting is unnecessary and harmful to Kansans. There is no current state law providing guidance for ranked-choice voting methods, and it has only rarely been utilized in party primary elections (2020 democratic primary most recently). Since there are no laws for its implementation, a ban would only serve to restrict the ability of Kansans' to develop this voting method.

In jurisdictions that utilize ranked-choice voting, voters report increased voter satisfaction, that it offers alternatives to the two major political parties, and provides Kansans' the ability to have their vote weighted by preference to each candidate, separately from their political consideration.² Regardless, a ban on this rarely utilized but important method of voting is not an appropriate measure.

Proponents of this bill argue that ballots are thrown out with this method. This is false. Ballots are not thrown out because of the design of ranked-choice voting. Instead, common reasons for ballot rejections could include failing to meet mail-in deadlines, incorrect voter registration information or voting at an incorrect polling location. All of those reasons would also reject ballots as they are currently cast.

Pros of Ranked Choice Voting³:

- Determines the candidate with strongest support
 - Allows voters' to express the level of support for all candidates. 'Winner takes all' (aka most votes wins)
- Encourages civil campaigning among competitors
- Reduces 'wasted' votes by weighting votes (a last choice is still a choice!)
- Eliminates the need for multiple elections

I believe in fairly representing both sides, so below are common critiques of ranked-choice voting and my stance on each.

² <https://kansasreflector.com/2025/01/28/out-of-state-advocates-support-kansas-ranked-choice-voting-ban/>

³ <https://www.rankedyote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/pros-and-cons-of-rcv>

Critiques of Ranked Choice Voting⁴

- It's too complicated and/or expensive
 - Fair! Change is hard, and ranking candidates is more complicated than selecting just one. Kansans are smart, capable people and I am confident we can understand ranking candidates by preference. Kansans' last used it in the 2020 democratic presidential primary.
 - It may require an initial investment to upgrade our voting equipment and provide training. Consider the investment as a way to ensure voting integrity for the future and promote voters' ability to express their level of support for each candidate!
- Your vote gets “wasted” or “exhausted”
 - Voters need to understand that their vote will always be counted if they rank ALL candidates. If they want to express NO support for certain candidates, then they do not have to rank them. This option would work like our current ‘one vote’ system, where if you do not vote for a candidate, no vote is recorded. The only difference is giving voters their ability to indicate their preferences for more than one candidate.
 - An exhausted vote can happen in ranked-choice voting when ALL the candidates a voter ranks are eliminated. At that point, if there is no stated preference by the voter amongst the remaining candidates, the vote doesn't go toward any of them.
- The person with the most votes can lose
 - Ranked choice voting doesn't structurally favor any particular party. But, it does put pressure on the status quo. That's why sometimes those that benefit most from the status quo will resist or criticize ranked-choice voting.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Why should you listen to me? Great question. First, because I am a born and raised Kansan (Go Shockers!) who values my freedom and civil rights. Second, because I am advocating on behalf of my family. My family is full of farmers, ranchers, mechanics, educators, active and veteran service members, and small business owners. I have something in common with almost everyone on this committee, and that is only from looking at your candidate profiles! Each of them have a unique perspective that could be harmed if a ban on ranked-choice voting were instituted.

Your committee is composed of educators, veterans, a rancher, managers, and public servants. Each of you brings a unique perspective and voice to the table. Ranked-choice voting allows voters the same.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,
Amber Schmidt
Private Citizen

⁴ <https://www.rankedvote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/pros-and-cons-of-rcv>