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Chairman Proctor, Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 6. My name is Jason Snead, executive director of Honest Elections Project Action, a nonprofit group dedicated to preserving free and fair elections. I also serve as the co-chair of the Stop RCV coalition, a nationwide network working to halt the spread of RCV.

SB 6 bans the complicated voting scheme known as ranked-choice voting. Eleven states have already banned RCV, including Missouri, where in 2024 nearly 70% of voters approved a constitutional prohibition on RCV. In fact, the 2024 election reflected a tidal wave of public opposition to RCV. Voters in six states—Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Oregon—overwhelmingly rejected ballot measures aimed at bringing RCV to their elections. The public consensus is clear: Ranked-choice voting has no place in American elections.

RCV is corrosive to public trust in elections. Consider how a ranked-choice election works. No matter how it is branded—"Final Five," "Instant-runoff," proportional representation, etc.—RCV is a scheme aimed at ending the American tradition of "one person, one vote." Instead, voters are asked to rank candidates by order of preference. Winners are computed through a series of elimination rounds. If no one wins a majority of the first-place vote, the candidate with the least first-place votes is eliminated and ballots are redistributed to each voter's next highest pick. This repeats until a candidate gets a majority of the remaining votes.

RCV makes every stage of the voting process more complicated, so much so that enormous effort must be put into reeducating the public. New York City spent $15 million to teach people how to vote in an RCV election, while Maine was forced to produce a 19-page guide for voters.

All of this takes more time than voters are accustomed to. First, voters must study the platforms of numerous candidates for each office, including many who are fringe or otherwise unelectable. Then they must decide which candidates to rank, and the order in which to rank them, for every RCV race on a ballot. One MIT study found that filling out a ballot takes 12 seconds longer per candidate compared to typical plurality elections. In a "Final Five"-style system, RCV adds a full minute per race. In other words, if RCV advocates succeed in replacing federal, state, and local elections with ranked-choice voting, the time it takes to vote could easily double, risking long lines, voter fatigue in down-ballot races, and potentially deterring people from voting altogether.

Tabulating votes is also a challenge. With RCV, tabulation cannot begin until every ballot is received, meaning delayed results. Recounts only compound the issue. Candidates looking for any edge may demand recounts of close elimination rounds knowing that changing the order in which candidates are eliminated can upend the final results of the election. In other words, RCV increases the likelihood of post-election challenges, recounts, and litigation.

Because of the complexity of RCV, it is possible that tabulation mistakes can go undetected. In fact, Oakland, California experienced this firsthand in 2022. Tabulators mistakenly eliminated hundreds of votes and certified the wrong winner in a school board contest. That error nearly went undetected because of RCV's inherent complexity.

Another significant issue is the problem of so-called "exhausted" ballots, that is, if voters do not rank every available candidate, and if their choices are eliminated before a final winner is computed, their ballots are eliminated as well. With each round of elimination, it appears as if fewer people voted. Roughly 140,000 ballots were exhausted in New York City's 2021 mayoral primary, while about 11,000 were exhausted in Alaska's 2022 special congressional election.

Eliminating exhausted ballots is the only way RCV can deliver on its signature promise to ensure that candidates win with majority support. But with RCV, this "majority" is merely manufactured by eliminating ballots and redistributing votes. Again, consider the Alaska special election: If the roughly 11,000 exhausted ballots are added back to the vote totals, Congresswoman Mary Peltola's margin shrinks from a 51.5% majority to a 48.4% plurality.

The problems with RCV's majority mirage run even deeper. A first-place vote clearly does not signal the same level of support for a candidate as a third-place vote. The latter may signify indifference, opposition—or perhaps nothing at all, if the mark was made randomly by an exhausted voter ranking his 50th candidate of the day. Yet RCV treats every ranking as a vote for a candidate, and manufacturers majorities based on second- and third-place votes.

Other issues abound. A 2023 study by the Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota concluded that ranked-choice voting failed to reduce political polarization, increase diversity among election officials, increase voter turnout, or decrease negative campaigning. In fact, one study of RCV in Maine found that "negative spending increased significantly…casting doubt on the claim that RCV makes campaigns more civil."

Many jurisdictions try ranked-choice voting only to repeal it. For instance, proponents tout a Utah pilot program that recruited two-dozen cities, yet over half have withdrawn citing public confusion and RCV's failure to deliver on its promises.

The push for ranked-choice voting is not an organic, bottom-up movement led by local activists. It is a concerted national campaign by a small group of elite liberal megadonors to remake elections across the nation. They are funding local advocacy groups, hiring lobbyists, facilitating media coverage, and spending tens of millions on ballot measure campaigns.

Americans want elections with clear rules that deliver clear winners. RCV offers neither. I encourage you to advance Senate Bill 6 and protect Kansas's elections from the confusing scheme known as ranked-choice voting.

Thank you for considering this testimony.