

Testimony on SB6 (Oral Opponent)
House Committee on Elections
Submitted: Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Chairman Proctor and members of the Committee:

As a member of Rank the Vote Kansas, a registered Republican, and an active Kansas voter, I believe Senate Bill No. 6 to be unnecessary, and even counterproductive, to the administration of elections in the state of Kansas.

First, this bill is unnecessary to prevent ranked-choice voting (RCV) methods for being used in elected offices governed by the statutes of Kansas. The Kansas Statutes Annotated (K.S.A.) Chapter 25 contains a number of mandates which assume a plurality-winner, first-past-the-post (FPTP) form of voting. For example, K.S.A. [25-614](#) requires that voters designate “by a cross or check mark” their preferred candidate on a ballot, but a ranked-choice ballot would require voters to rank their preferred candidates instead, which is impossible with these ballot instructions. K.S.A. [25-616](#), 617, and 618 also require this when designating the form of general election ballots, even at the municipal level. Finally, similar requirements are established for primary elections in K.S.A. [25-213](#) and 213a.

K.S.A. [25-702](#) additionally requires that a plurality vote govern elections for “any officer” and the combined ticket for governor and lieutenant governor, while ranked-choice voting methods would require a majority vote for those elections. This defeats the purpose of RCV methods, as one candidate receives a plurality of first-choice votes by definition. These rules are applicable uniformly to all Kansas jurisdictions, so I do not believe even a home rule justification would exempt municipalities from these requirements. A municipality wanting to use a ranked-choice voting system would not be able to do so, even if this bill is not passed.

Even if the bill was necessary to eliminate ranked-choice voting methods in the state of Kansas, that would not be an outcome that would improve Kansas elections. When ranked-choice voting methods are used, voters consistently find them easy and understandable. Utah's Municipal Alternative Voting Methods Pilot Project, which allows cities to opt into using ranked-choice voting until the end of 2025, falls into this category. An October 2024 [evaluation](#) of this pilot project by Utah Valley University found that majorities of Utah voters enjoyed using RCV methods, were more likely to vote for their preferred candidate, and wanted to continue using it locally. 81% of voters even found RCV easy to use! The pilot has generated enough interest in continuing to use ranked-choice voting that [a bill](#) has been introduced to extend the deadline to the end of 2035. This style of ranked-choice voting legislation allows cities to use the voting system that works best for them, without restricting other cities or the state government. Senate Bill 6 would be a clear statement against that kind of local government innovation, which the party of state and local government should support.

Additionally, I want to point out what I believe is the best case for individual Kansas voters: that ranked-choice voting substantially reduces the spoiler effect. For example, since 2014, the Kansas gubernatorial election has been won with a minority of the vote, unlike many other Kansas elections during the same time frame. In all three gubernatorial elections since 2014, the sum of the votes for third-party or independent candidates has added up to more than the difference between the major party candidates. Unlike plurality-winner FPTP voting methods like the one we have now, ranked-choice voting methods require a majority of the vote to win, and the ranking system allows voters to vote for third-party candidates while being sure their vote will be re-allocated to other candidates in the order they prefer.

This property is especially valuable in party primaries, where it is even more likely that multiple competitive candidates may be running than in the general election. An illustrative example is the [2018 Kansas Republican primary for Governor](#), where substantial fractions of the vote split between four different candidates, resulting in the incumbent Governor losing the primary by only [343 votes](#) to a candidate who went on to lose the general election. Under an instant-runoff voting system, however, a plurality of the vote is not enough to win, and only candidates who are voters' second and third choices can do so. That may not have changed the outcome, but it would have ensured that voters' preferences were taken into account in the decision between the final two candidates. Establishing a ranked-choice voting method would allow people to vote their conscience while still ensuring majority rule, making it a better system than our current one.

I, like all of you, share the ambition to make elections more participatory, more democratic, and more secure. However, banning ranked-choice voting methods does none of those things, and is also unnecessary. I respectfully ask you to vote no on Senate Bill No. 6.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony on this matter.

Andrew Booze