



Georgia

2/22/2022

Dear Chairwoman and Committee Members:

My name is Anna Dennis, and I am the executive director of Common Cause Georgia. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest; promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all; and empower all people to make their voices heard in the political process.

Common Cause Georgia is in support of H.B. 1085, which allows for local jurisdictions to adopt and use instant runoff elections (also known as Ranked Choice Voting). Instant runoff elections allow voters the option to rank candidates in order of preference: one, two, three, and so forth. When ballots are tabulated, if a candidate receives a majority of votes, they win the contest. However, if there is no majority winner after counting first choices, the race is decided by an "instant runoff." The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as 'number 1' will have their votes count for their next choice. This process continues until there's a majority winner, or a candidate won with more than half of the vote.

The current election system forces voters to make a choice about which candidate they believe is most electable, regardless of whether that candidate is the one that best represents their views. It limits choices for voters as well by pressuring candidates to drop out for fear of being a "spoiler," while at the same time allows candidates to ignore communities as they seek to win a plurality in primary races.

Instant runoffs incentivize candidates to engage with more communities, as they are also competing for second choice votes. This can lessen the incentive to run a negative campaign, as candidates do best when they reach out positively to as many voters as possible, including those supporting their opponents. It will diversify the choices for voters, reducing the pressure on candidates to drop out at risk of being a spoiler and allowing voters to cast a ballot for the candidate that best represents their views, regardless of electability.

A growing number of states and jurisdictions are using the instant runoff system. Notably, 23 Utah cities and towns opted into a municipal pilot program authorized by the state legislature, like what is being proposed here. New York City used the system in its recent mayoral election. Common Cause New York did extensive polling of voters during the inaugural use of ranked choice voting in New York City elections. That research showed an overwhelming number of



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voters embraced ranked choice voting, with 85% ranking at least two candidates in the mayoral election. Voters found ranked choice voting to be easy to use, with 94% of voters surveyed reporting that their ballot was simple to complete.

Accordingly, Common Cause Georgia supports HB1085, which allows for local jurisdictions to adopt and use instant runoff elections.

Sincerely,

Aunna Dennis

Executive Director  
Common Cause Georgia