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Legislation Text

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Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight
Chicago City Council February 1,
2023

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING ON ADOPTING RANKED CHOICE VOTING FOR CHICAGO'S MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago (the "City") is a home rule unit of government under Article VII, Section 6(a) of the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and, as such, may exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Article VII, Section 6(f) of the Constitution of the State of Illinois, the City is empowered to "provide for its officers, their manner of selection and terms of office only as approved by referendum or as otherwise authorized by law"; and

WHEREAS, Jurisdictions around the country have adopted the ranked choice voting, or instant runoff voting, model including Alaska and Maine for state and federal elections, and for local elections in more than 50 cities, including New York City, San Francisco, Oakland, Minneapolis, and, most recently, Evanston, where voters approved a referendum allowing for the adoption of ranked choice voting for future municipal elections; and

WHEREAS, Even in "single choice voting" or "first-past-the-post" elections - which is the current practice in the City and Illinois generally - military and overseas voters may vote using a version of ranked choice voting under the Illinois Election Code (10 ILCS 5/16-5.01 (c)); and

WHEREAS, Under ranked choice voting generally, voters have the option to rank candidates in order of preference, and if no candidate wins a majority of first-choice votes outright, a procedure exists to eliminate the candidates receiving the fewest votes over one or more successive rounds, and the votes those candidates received will go to voters' lower ranked candidates; and

WHEREAS, The adoption of ranked choice voting has led to a variety of positive civic outcomes in the jurisdictions that have adopted it, including increasing voter participation; reducing the frequency of strategic voting in which residents decline to vote for their preferred candidate because they perceive the candidate as being less likely to win; increasing the likelihood that candidates will engage with all voters, even those for whom the candidate is not their first or second choice; enhancing consensus-building and campaign civility; and increasing the diversity of candidates and elected officials; and

WHEREAS, Ranked choice voting also has practical benefits for the operation of government, including reducing the costs of elections and shortening the campaign cycle by eliminating the need for a separate runoff election; and

WHEREAS, The City Council, in keeping with the powers granted to the City as a home rule unit of government, should explore the feasibility and potential positive impacts of adopting ranked choice voting for municipal elections; now, therefore:

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, do hereby call upon the Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight to hold a public hearing to discuss the adoption of ranked choice voting for Chicago's municipal elections and to invite experts on ranked choice voting to testify at the hearing.

MATTHEW J. MARTIN Alderman, 47th
Ward