

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs LD 1083 “An Act to Implement Ranked-choice Voting for Presidential Primary and General Elections in Maine.”

March 20th, 2019

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 1083 “An Act to Implement Ranked-choice Voting for Presidential Primary and General Elections in Maine.”

My name is Julia Fitz-Randolph and I live in Pemaquid. I am here today on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN) as a person of faith committed to our shared belief in strengthening democracy by protecting and enhancing voter participation.

Ranked Choice Voting has been endorsed by Maine Unitarian Universalists throughout its complicated and comprehensive journey to become law in 2018. We have collected signatures, testified at public hearings, written letters to editors, rallied at the State House, and had conversations with many of you about the importance of creating a more positive

campaign environment and greater support for the democratic process.

LD 1083 will now expand our Ranked Choice Voting system to give Mainers more voice and more choice in the 2020 presidential election. Its three components are a trifecta of increasing voter participation in the democratic process.

By moving Maine from a presidential caucus to a presidential primary state, more Mainers will have a voice in selecting our Presidential candidate. Juggling a five hour time commitment, arranging child care, perhaps limiting only one voting member in the household the opportunity to attend a caucus, will no longer be a roadblock to participation. Presidential primaries are a long overdue and proven solution to increasing voter engagement.

Adopting Ranked Choice Voting for the Presidential Primary will encourage more Mainers to cast their votes. The bedrock of voting for your preferred candidate and then having your second or third choice be considered, enhances turnout, encourages civility, and levels the playing field to include everyone's voice.

And finally, expanding Ranked Choice Voting for the general election of the President will once again have Maine lead the way in creating a statewide voting system that is a powerful platform to achieve civil discourse.

I know all of you decry the presence of hate speech, vulgarity, extreme incivility and other dangerous and unseemly

words and behaviors that are becoming all-too familiar tactics in our current political environment.

Unitarian Universalists believe Maine can send a strong message to any Presidential candidate seeking our vote: No personal attacks welcome. Maine voters are not likely to rank as a second place candidate someone who has issued personal attacks against their favorite choice.

For the reasons articulated above, the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network urges this committee to vote “Ought to Pass” for LD 1083. Thank you for your consideration.