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The Voter Choice Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Angus King (I-Maine)

America's electoral system rewards partisanship and discourages political competition. In most U.S. elections, a candidate can win without receiving a majority of votes cast, and they are often motivated to attack their opponents rather than make a compelling case to the public. Voters for third parties can inadvertently help elect candidates with opposite views from their own, and close elections are often forced into expensive runoffs.

Instead of voting for a single candidate, a ranked choice voting (RCV) model for elections (also known as "instant runoff" in a single-winner race and "single transferable vote" in multi-winner races) allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. In races where there can be only one winner, the lowest vote-getter is eliminated if no candidate earns a majority outright based on first choices. Voters for the eliminated candidate then have their ballot count for their next choice. The process repeats until one candidate earns a majority (you can learn more about how this process works [here](#)).

The Voter Choice Act authorizes \$40 million in federal grants to support state and local governments that *choose* to transition to RCV. Grants would support up to 50 percent of the transition cost, including through the purchase of voting equipment and tabulation software, ballot design, educational materials, and voter outreach.

Benefits of RCV include:

- **More choices for voters.** RCV lets voters support their first choice without inadvertently electing their worst choice, increasing competition without the risk of spoilers.
- **Discourages negative campaigning.** RCV rewards candidates who are the second choice for some of their opponents' supporters, reducing the incentive for slash-and-burn politics.
- **Rewards consensus views.** RCV rewards candidates who appeal beyond their "base" to a broader cross-section of voters by requiring the winner to receive majority support.
- **Reduces cost.** RCV eliminates the need for costly runoff elections.

To date, Alaska and Maine have adopted RCV for all federal elections, while states like Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina have embraced RCV to allow overseas and military voters to participate in runoff elections. Local governments in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, and Utah have also adopted some form of RCV for municipal elections.