



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF LOS ANGELES**

June 4, 2014

City of Los Angeles Municipal Elections Reform Commission
200 N. Spring Street, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Commission Recommendations on Ranked Choice Voting

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles urges that the Commission recommend the adoption of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) by the City of Los Angeles for all single winner elections.

The adoption of RCV by the City of Los Angeles would eliminate the need for a separate runoff election, as it permits offices to be filled by a single-round, majority vote method. The consolidation of two elections into one would save money on election administration by the City, thereby freeing up funds that could be directed towards voter outreach to encourage greater participation.

RCV would interact with the City's campaign finance laws to promote fairer elections. It would allow a stronger public financing system, because matching funds would be expended on one election rather than two. One election per cycle rather than two would also enable the Commission to pursue enforcement more effectively with the same budget. One election instead of two would eliminate the second round of fundraising after the primary, during which time the candidates must spend their time speaking to donors rather than to the voters who will elect them.

When used for special elections to fill a vacancy created by death or resignation, RCV shortens the time that a district is without representation.

RCV promotes values of fairness and freedom of choice. With RCV, a voter can vote her true preference without fear that doing so will be "wasting" her vote. If a voter's candidate is eliminated, she will still have a voice in who is elected.

In reading the Draft Report from the Commission, the League notes that consideration of alternative voting methods, including the use of Ranked Choice Voting has been given minimal consideration, and dismissed as not a step that would increase voter turnout.

Low voter turnout is undoubtedly due to a variety of causes, and the long-term trend nationwide to lower participation in all elections may well mask any effects on voter turnout that the adoption of RCV has had in other jurisdictions. Adopting a voting method that is perceived as fair and that encourages participation by a variety of candidates is likely to be good for voter participation in the long run.

Ranked Choice Voting tends to reduce negative campaigning, because each candidate has an incentive to be the second or lower choice of voters backing another candidate. To the extent that

low voter turnout is due to voter disgust with the current electoral environment, RCV could be a positive influence in increasing voters' motivation to go to the polls.

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles urges the Election Reform Commission to recommend Ranked Choice Voting as the method of electing Council Members, School Board Members, and Citywide Officers in Los Angeles.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Elizabeth Ralston". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Elizabeth Ralston
President
League of Women Voters of Los Angeles