



The League of Women Voters of Oakland

The League of Women Voters - the place where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement

April 4, 2011

City Council
City of Oakland

Subject: Ranked Choice Voting – April 5 agenda, item 12

Dear Councilmembers,

We of the League of Women Voters of Oakland have a long-standing position in favor of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and were strong advocates of the system when it was on the ballot in 2006. We have been gratified to see the positive effects as Oakland implemented RCV in 2010, and so we remain strong supporters of the system.

We believe that RCV brought the following benefits to Oakland:

- More voters participated in the November 2010 mayoral election than in the last mayoral election: 119,000 vs. 84,000 in 2006, an increase of over 40%. Voter turnout is always higher in November general elections than in June primaries. RCV requires one election, the one where the highest number of voters participate. The chart *Voter Participation with RCV and Top-Two Runoff, Oakland Mayor: 2010 and 2006* on page 2 of the report submitted by Nancy Nadel shows that voter participation was higher with RCV in every council district.
- The city saved money. By eliminating the primary for city and school board offices in 2010, Oakland saved \$800,000.
- Each voter had the chance to vote his or her conscience by casting a first-place vote for a favored candidate, and then voting for acceptable alternatives as second and third choices.
- Candidates had an incentive to broaden their campaigns to appeal both to their bases and to wider sections of the community. Candidates who formed coalitions, walked precincts, attended forums and endorsement meetings, and worked to reach all voters were more successful than candidates who made more limited efforts to reach voters.
- Oakland voters understood and used the RCV system. In the 2010 mayoral race, 99.7 percent of voters cast valid ballots, a clear indication of voter understanding. About 72

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percent of Oakland voters ranked three candidates; another 13 percent ranked two candidates.

The League was gratified to see the changes that RCV brought to our local elections and we feel confident that this system will continue to expand democracy in Oakland.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The signature on the left is 'K Gavzy' and the signature on the right is 'Suzanne Loosen'. Both signatures are written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Katherine Gavzy and Suzanne Loosen
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Oakland