Common Sense

Winning Reform

November 29, 2018

Bruce Poliquin, Maine's incumbent second-district U.S. Representative, knows what to blame for his loss this last election: the preferences of Maine voters.

Well, he blames Ranked Choice
Voting (RCV) . . . in which
voters rank the candidates by
preference, and whose votes are counted so to
better tally second- and even third-favored options.*

The Republican Representative enjoyed a slight lead on election night, but fell short of a majority. When two independent candidates were eliminated, their second-choice votes put

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Democrat challenger Jared Golden over the 50-percent mark.

Maine Republicans are upset. It turns out that losing isn't as much fun as winning.

Shocking, I know.

So Poliquin sued, arguing that RCV is unconstitutional. He asked a federal judge to stop

State of Maine Sample Ballot Democratic Primary Election, June 12, 2018
Instructions to Voters To vote, fill in the oval like this To rank your candidate choices, fill in the oval: In the 1st column for your 1st choice candidate. In the 2nd column for your 2nd choice candidate, and so on. Continue until you have ranked as many or as few candidates as you like. Cote, Adam Roland Senford Dion, Donna J. Baddelord Dion, Mark N. Portland North Benshck Mills, Janet T. Farmington Russell, Diane Marie

the ballot tabulation.

Judge Lance Walker, a Trump appointee, was "not persuaded." He additionally noted that "the citizens of Maine have rejected the policy arguments plaintiffs advance against RCV."

Twice.

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"While Mr. Poliquin publicly works through the five stages of grief over his election loss," remarked RCV advocate Kyle Bailey, "the real story is that the implementation of Maine's Ranked Choice Voting law was smooth, transparent, and in accordance with the will of the Maine voters,"

Meanwhile, Chuck Slocum, past chair of the Republican Party of Minnesota, urges fellow Republicans to "consider" this non-partisan reform.

Yes, a process that better counts voter preferences ought to help your political party.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

^{*} In cases where no candidate gains a majority of first-choice votes, the last place candidate is eliminated and his or her votes re-allocated to those voters' second choice, and this process continues until a candidate reaches a majority.