RE: Support HB 2004, Statewide Ranked Choice Voting
Senate Committee on Rules

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the Committee,

My name is Stan Lockhart and I am the past Chair of the Utah Republican Party and have been involved in Utah's efforts to explore ranked choice voting.

I come before you in support of HB 2004. Ranked choice voting came to Utah in the late 1990s by conservative grassroots activists in the Republican Party who wanted to use it in conventions. Since that time, it has been used in several Republican and Democratic State and County conventions, most recently in 2020.

In 2018, the Utah State Legislature almost unanimously passed HB 35, establishing a pilot in which cities can opt in to ranked choice voting. Gov. Herbert signed it into law in March 2018. Since then, 22 city elections have used ranked choice voting: big and small cities, urban and rural cities, well-established cities and fast-growing newer cities.

Post election surveys have told us that voters find ranked choice easy to use (over 80% in both 2019 and 2021) and easy to understand (90% in 2021). Voters like using a ranked choice voting ballot (over 50% in every city).

The implementation of ranked choice voting has been a smooth process, helped by a voter education campaign partially funded by the State Elections Office. In 2021, preliminary results were produced on election night or the day after - the same timeline as the commonly used plurality elections. Ranked choice voting results were shown alongside results from non-ranked choice voting races, including graphical visualizations of the round-by-round balloting.

Allow me to reiterate, implementation has been a smooth process. It takes no more effort to program a ranked choice voting election than a plurality election. Preliminary results can be displayed as often as desired.

One of the most powerful aspects of **ranked choice voting** is that it **identifies the candidate with the most support.** Ranked choice voting addresses the problems of "vote-splitting" and "spoiler" candidates that sometimes result in election winners without broad support. In our current plurality elections, a majority of voters may support a particular ideology or party, but split their votes among candidates who support that ideology – resulting in a winner whose views reflect the minority of voters.

**Ranked choice voting is a well-tested voting method.** Approximately 13 million voters in 63 jurisdictions across the U.S. have voted using ranked choice ballots. Since 2020, legislatures in nine states have passed ranked choice voting bills, including "local options" legislation that allows municipalities in Utah, Virginia, Maine, and Colorado to use it.

The Virginia Republican Party used ranked choice voting in 2021 to nominate candidates for statewide offices. Many observers credit the use of ranked choice voting for **nominating highly electable candidates** with great unity behind them. The Virginia GOP also used ranked choice voting in 2022 to nominate four congressional candidates. Those campaigns were observed to be **far less negative,** and those candidates emerged from the primary election with **much higher positivity ratings** than non-ranked choice voting candidates in adjacent districts.

Finally, winners in ranked choice voting elections always have a majority of the vote when matched head-to-head in the final round.

With all the benefits of ranked choice voting, you should take advantage of this upgrade for your statewide elections, and to allow municipalities to take advantage of it if they wish.

I urge you to support this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Signed,
Stan Lockhart