

# Ohio Senate votes to ban ranked choice voting

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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Ranked choice voting would effectively be banned in the state under a bipartisan bill the Ohio Senate passed Wednesday in a 27-5 vote.

[Senate Bill 63](#) would ban ranked choice voting for state elections and penalize localities that tried to use it. Supporters of the bill say that method of electing leaders is confusing, costly and undermines trust in election outcomes.

Opponents say ranked choice voting makes races more competitive—even in gerrymandered districts—and would help restore Ohioans' belief that their votes matter.

No Ohio cities use ranked choice voting, but [Rank the Vote Ohio](#) has been working to bring it here. [University Heights considered adopting ranked choice voting](#) but ultimately decided against it.

The Senate vote marks the first major step toward making the ban state law. The Ohio House has yet to weigh in, and Gov. Mike DeWine would have the final say on whether to sign a bill.

Here's what you need to know:

## **What is ranked choice voting?**

In a ranked choice election, voters choose more than one candidate and rank them in order of preference—first choice, second choice, third choice and so on.

If no one wins a majority of first-choice votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Their votes transfer to voters' next choice, and the process repeats until one candidate reaches a majority.

Rank the Vote Ohio Director Denise Riley compared it to ice cream flavors when she testified at the Statehouse.

Voters, she said, could choose as many flavors as they wanted but are under no obligation to. Just because a race had 20 candidates does not mean voters would need to rank them all.

“I realize you are chocolate and vanilla respectively, and you don’t want anyone to have more choices. It’s sort of your unspoken point,” Riley said. “I’m here to tell you that the public really wants and likes more choices.”

Bill sponsors Republican state Sen. Theresa Gavarone from Bowling Green and Democratic state Sen. Bill DeMora from Columbus disagreed.

“In a time when people of both parties have questioned the integrity of our elections, it seems crazy to me that anyone would consider an election method that, in its basic form, distorts election outcomes,” Gavarone said.

DeMora said ranked choice voting is “confusing” for both voters and election workers, pointing to a 2023 election in Arlington, Virginia, where officials spent \$50,000 on voter education and still saw widespread confusion.

## **What about home rule?**

Ohio’s constitution grants cities and counties “home rule” authority, allowing them to govern their own affairs—including how they conduct local elections.

But SB 63 would penalize any local government that tries to adopt ranked choice voting, making them ineligible for money from the state’s Local Government Fund until they reverse course.

That includes cities that pass a charter amendment, ordinance, or resolution in favor of the system.

Riley warned this approach could violate home rule protections, saying “such actions set a dangerous precedent.”

## **What other states are doing**

Several states are moving to limit or ban ranked choice voting this year.

Earlier this month, North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong [signed a law](#) banning the practice statewide.

Lawmakers in Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa and Texas [are also considering similar bans](#).

On the other hand, [Maine](#) and [Alaska](#) used ranked choice voting in the last presidential election, and cities like New York City and Minneapolis used it for local races.

## **What happens next?**

The Ohio Senate's vote sends the bill to the House for further debate.

Lawmakers are juggling multiple priorities — [including the state budget](#) — so it's unclear how quickly the House might take it up.

A ban that Gavarone and DeMora introduced in the last two-year legislative session [never advanced out of committee](#).

The legislative calendar is packed leading into summer, but this General Assembly doesn't end until December 2026.