



Co-Chairs Meek and Wallan, and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Isabela Villarreal, I use she/her pronouns, and I am the Policy and Communications Manager at Next Up Action Fund. Thank you to Marchel for giving an overview of our coalition, during my time I'll be sharing why our coalition believes Ranked Choice Voting is right for Oregon.

Democracy should represent all the people it serves. While Oregon is a leader in the mechanics of voting, we can continue our tradition of being the national leader on democracy by upgrading our elections themselves. Our current electoral system often favors candidates with greater access to resources - making it difficult for grassroots, community-driven candidates to get elected. These systems can also result in candidates getting elected to office with less than 50% of the vote meaning most voters end up represented by someone they didn't vote for. In the 2020 primaries in races with more than two candidates, over 2/3 of the races saw the majority of people vote against the winner.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a simple upgrade to our elections that provides voters with more choices and includes more voices. It reduces barriers for voters by eliminating the spoiler effect - forcing us to choose between who we like best and who "can win" RCV guarantees that winning candidates always receive more than half the vote. It also reduces barriers to entry and allows greater participation by both voters and candidates. You may hear about other theoretical voting reforms, but RCV is the only one that has been successfully implemented across the country and around the world with positive results.

**Our coalition has identified three main reasons as to why Ranked Choice Voting will help move us closer to our vision of an equitable, accessible, and just electoral system:**

**Firstly**, RCV creates a more reflective democracy by increasing racial and ethnic diversity in elected officials, and it greatly bridges the gender gap. Case studies show people of color are more likely to win elected positions when RCV is implemented. In the case study of, "four Bay Area cities that use RCV (San Francisco, San Leandro, Oakland, and Berkeley), candidates of color have won 62% of RCV races, compared to only 38% prior to RCV." The number of women that run and win has gone from 25% to 49% in cities that have adopted RCV as well. This is because RCV reduces the barriers to entry for new candidates in races without an incumbent.

**Secondly**, RCV greatly expands voter choice. RCV ensures that Oregonians have the freedom to vote for who they really want. In our current system, if your favorite candidate is unlikely to win, you have two bad choices: (1) cast a "safe" vote for one of the front-runners to avoid electing whom you like least, or (2) "waste" your vote on your favorite. Voters shouldn't be forced into a lose-lose dilemma. RCV lets you vote for who you truly support.

**Thirdly**, RCV rewards consensus candidates over splinter candidates and eliminates the spoiler effect. RCV rewards candidates that run on issues, consensus, and coalition-building. Under RCV, a candidate must appeal to 50%+1 of the electorate in order to succeed. Under our current “plurality” system, candidates can win despite most people voting for someone else. RCV guarantees the election of majority winners, whose support extends beyond a narrow base, by requiring the winner to have more than 50% of the vote.

Tonight you’ll hear from many community-based organizations, local leaders, elected officials, and experts who will further outline why Ranked Choice Voting is the right choice for Oregon, and the right step towards ending a pluralistic democracy.

Thank you for your time,

Isabela Villarreal  
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