



Department of the Secretary of State

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Secretary of State

OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON

MODERNIZING THE PEOPLE'S LEGISLATURE

Ranked Choice Voting

Testimony Provided by Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State of Maine

March 09, 2021

Dear Chairman Meek, Chairwoman Wallan, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today regarding Maine's experience with ranked choice voting.

My name is Shenna Bellows, I am Maine's 50th Secretary of State and the State's chief elections officer.

In Maine, we have used ranked choice voting in some of our elections since our primary elections in June 2018. Due to requirements of our Constitution, currently we can use ranked choice voting for our partisan primary elections, and in federal-level general elections.

We have found that voters appreciate the option to rank the candidates they support – while also being able to indicate their subsequent preferences, should their first pick not have as much support as other candidates.¹ Ranked choice voting was passed into law via statewide referendum and upheld in a subsequent referendum, and continues to be very popular. Voters can vote based on principle rather than trying to vote strategically based on who they think has the greatest chance of winning.

While negative campaigning hasn't completely disappeared in Maine yet, I think we have seen more instances of candidates giving each other praise for things they admire about each other, or candidates telling voters who their second choices will be when they cast their ballot.

¹ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/06/24/our-view-historic-ranked-choice-vote-worked-as-promised/>

Regarding implementation, we were able to do so in a year and half from passage of the law by Maine voters in November 2016, to first use in an election in June 2018, with no significant problems.

The Secretary of State's office, along with some outside groups, conducted public education about how ranked choice voting works, and polls have shown that Maine voters understood how to rank their vote.² Ballot design and clear and transparent processes for tabulation were critical aspects of implementation. I would be happy to talk with Oregon election officials about technology acquisition and the rulemaking process as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome any questions you have.

² <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/11/12/news/exit-polling-finds-narrow-majority-of-mainers-back-expansion-of-ranked-choice-voting%E2%80%8B/>