

March 16, 2021



Oregon Progressive Party Independent Party of Oregon

Position on Bills at 2021 Session of Oregon Legislature:

Dear Committee: **SB 343: Support, if amended to include
STAR Voting**

The Oregon Progressive Party and Independent Party of Oregon support this bill, if amended to include STAR Voting. As it stands now, SB 343 unnecessarily authorizes county governments to adopt ranked-choice voting (RCV) for county elections and also directs the Secretary of State to assist the counties in implementing RCV.

This bill, unless amended, has three problems. First, it authorizes the counties to adopt a voting method that they already have full authority to adopt under the Oregon Constitution. Article II says:

Section 16. Election by plurality; proportional representation. In all elections authorized by this constitution until otherwise provided by law, the person or persons receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected, but provision may be made by law for elections by equal proportional representation of all the voters for every office which is filled by the election of two or more persons whose official duties, rights and powers are equal and concurrent. Every qualified elector resident in his precinct and registered as may be required by law, may vote for one person under the title for each office. **Provision may be made by law for the voter's direct or indirect expression of his first, second or additional choices among the candidates for any office.** For an office which is filled by the election of one person it may be required by law that the person elected shall be the final choice of a majority of the electors voting for candidates for that office. These principles may be applied by law to nominations by political parties and organizations.

Thus, RCV is already authorized by Oregon Constitution, Article II, Section 16, as is STAR Voting.

Second, the bill's assistance provisions are limited to RCV, when there are other alternative voting methods that many would prefer. The most prominent of those is Score-Then-Automatic-Runoff (STAR) Voting, a system devised by Oregonians. It has some significant advantages over other forms of voting, including conventional RCV. See <https://starvoting.us> and <https://equal.vote>. The Independent Party of Oregon (IPO) used only STAR Voting in its 2020 primary election. It worked flawlessly. It is a fully packaged, off-the-shelf technology that cost IPO essentially nothing (other than the time involved in listing the candidates and providing biographical information). The results were the nominations of some IPO-member candidates, some Republicans, and some Democrats.

But SB 343 limits the assistance to counties implementing conventional RCV, because its definition of RCV is very specific and would exclude STAR Voting. We urge amendment of SB 343 to include STAR Voting, both in its assistance provision and in its explicit county authority provisions. We would not want counties to think that they are limited to RCV voting and not STAR Voting, which could be defined as a system of voting in which:

1. each voter can assign ratings (such as 0-5) to each candidate for the office;
2. the two candidates receiving the highest aggregate scores advance to the automatic runoff;
3. the runoff compares each voter's ratings of those two candidates only;
4. the runoff candidate preferred by most voters is the winner.

The STAR Voting website explains how it can be used to choose multiple winners in multi-member districts. In essence, the same process is used to determine the first winner. To determine the second winner, the calculations are repeated but without the data for the first winner. To determine the third winner, the calculations are repeated but without the data for the first or second winners. The process is repeated until all seats are filled.

Third, SB 343 applies only to "county elections," which apparently means election of county officials. Use of RCV and/or STAR Voting should be extended to all Oregon elections.

Oregon Progressive Party

Daniel Meek

authorized legal representative

dan@meek.net

503-293-9021

