

March 16, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Rules  
FR: Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)  
RE: SB 343

OSPIRG is a statewide public interest group that represents thousands of Oregonians.

**OSPIRG supports SB 343.**

Democracy is fundamentally about representation. In a functioning democracy, voters should be able to vote for candidates who they feel represent their views and values. But as our parties become increasingly polarized, voters often don't have the option to vote for representatives that share their beliefs. The views of Oregon voters run the political gamut but come election day, voters too often only have two options.

Making matters worse, because of the top-down effects of winner-take-all elections, candidates outside of the two major parties are functionally "spoiler candidates" forcing voters to sometimes choose between two candidates they don't fully support instead of voicing their true preferences. This results in voter dissatisfaction and candidates for office that don't represent the full range of political thought of the community.

In Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), the laboratories of democracy, cities and states across the country, have discovered a solution to these problems. The power to rank candidates minimizes "wasted votes" and frees voters to select their true first choice, second choice etcetera. On election day, voters could be comfortable voting their conscience without worrying about throwing away their vote. Additionally, RCV eliminates the need for costly and time consuming runoff elections.

Historically, the more complicated nature of counting RCV ballots was an impediment to widespread use but the latest voting technology can securely and efficiently accommodate. This bill would empower the Secretary of State to help communities that opt to use RCV to set up and run the best possible systems.

Our democracy works best when everyone participates. RCV would open the door for greater participation from candidates across the political spectrum and thus voters across the spectrum. Oregon can only benefit from a more robust competition of ideas.