



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 791

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Senate Committee on Rules

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Chair Wagner and members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 represents about 27,000 public and private-sector employees that provide public services to Oregonians across the state. We are testifying today in support of Senate Bill 791, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) which provides voters with more choices and includes more voices in our democracy.

We believe that our democracy should reflect the people that it is tasked with representing, and that begins with equitable access for candidates who do not have greater access to resources.

Our current system favors candidates with greater access to resources, making it difficult for first time candidates, women and people of color to get elected. Our state is diverse and our representatives should reflect the growing diversity of the people it represents.

By not reforming our current electoral system, we continue to reduce the number of choices for voters and uphold a system that forces voters to vote strategically instead of voting for candidates who share their values. These systems can also result in candidates getting elected into office with less than 50% of the vote. In the 2020 primaries in races with more than two candidates, over $\frac{2}{3}$ of the races saw the majority of people vote against the winner. This means that most voters end up represented by candidates they did not vote for.

RCV provides a solution to these issues by reducing barriers to entry and allows greater participation by both voters and candidates. RCV favors candidates with less access to resources and studies show people of color and women are more likely to win elected positions when RCV is implemented. In 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.¹ Additionally, the number of women that run and win has gone from 25% to 49% in cities that have adopted RCV.² RCV also eliminates the spoiler effect and guarantees that winning candidates always receive more than half the vote. Most importantly, RCV ensures that people vote for values and reward candidates that run on issues, consensus and coalition-building.

In supporting SB 791, we help create a reflective democracy by providing voters with more choices, equitable access for candidates and it guarantees that each vote matters. I urge you to vote yes on SB 791.

¹ Fair Vote. [Ranked Choice Voting and Racial Minority Voting Rights](#)

² Fair Vote. [Data on Ranked Choice Voting](#)