

SUPPORT: HB 2004—Ranked Choice Voting

Senate Rules Committee

Hearing Date: June 20, 2023

Testimony of Blair Bobier

My name is Blair Bobier, I live in Benton County, and I am the author of the successful ballot measure that made Benton the first county to use ranked choice voting elections in our State. I have been a member of the Oregon State Bar for 34 years, and I am writing in enthusiastic support of HB 2004.

I am one of the founders of Oregon Ranked Choice Voting Advocates, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, and helped shape this legislation working in conjunction with the community-based coalition supporting HB 2004, the Speaker's office, local jurisdictions seeking to implement Ranked Choice Voting, and State Elections officials.

The bill before you is a referral. If passed, it will be placed on the 2024 ballot for voters to decide.

The bill would create ranked choice voting elections for all statewide and federal offices in Oregon for both primary and general elections. The bill does NOT create an open primary, or a top two (or top 4 or top 5) system, and it does not include state legislative or judicial races.

The bill will implement ranked choice voting statewide in time for the 2028 elections—which will give election officials 5 years to prepare for its implementation.

Ranked choice voting is incredibly easy to use. Voters just pick their first, second and third choices, and so on. One of my sons used this method of voting in his kindergarten class, many years ago. Adults have also proven that they can navigate picking several choices in order of preference. In Benton County, we adopted Ranked Choice Voting in 2016 and started using it in 2020 to elect our County Commissioners. Corvallis now uses it to elect their mayor and city councilors. And, as I'm sure you are aware, voters in Portland and Multnomah County recently overwhelmingly approved charter amendments to use Ranked Choice Voting for local elections starting in 2024 and 2026, respectively.

Ranked Choice Voting is woven into the fabric of American life. It is used by Roberts Rules of Order, it has been enshrined in the Oregon Constitution since 1908, and it is used to determine which film wins the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Ranked Choice Voting is used around the world, from Ireland to Australia, and across the country from Maine to Alaska. In many places, Ranked Choice Voting has created an atmosphere that is more conducive for civil, issue-oriented campaigns and has encouraged more women and people of color to seek—and win—public office.

We know that many voters are discouraged by politics. And it's no wonder: campaigns rarely focus on issues and are full of mudslinging; good candidates—especially people of color and those from other marginalized communities—are often deterred from running for fear of splitting voter support; and voters often feel forced to choose a candidate with a better chance of winning, instead of the candidate we like best. Ranked choice voting is an easy and effective solution to these problems.

Ranked choice voting encourages candidates to be issue-oriented and avoid negative campaigning: candidates are rewarded for seeking support from as much of the community as possible and not just from likely supporters. Over 60 cities and counties in the U.S. use ranked choice voting and many have found that it leads to more civil campaigns and candidates seeking common ground. This is the perfect prescription for the growing polarization of politics.

Put simply, **Ranked Choice Voting will make our elections better.** And, when it comes to elections, Oregonians don't settle for second best.

I wholeheartedly support HB 2004 and respectfully request that this Committee send this bill to the Senate floor with a "do pass" recommendation.

Thank you.

