

My name is Jared Garson, and I am testifying in support of House Bill 2004 as a citizen, and a lifelong Oregonian. I'd like to share some reasons why I support Ranked Choice Voting.

1. Ranked Choice Voting would be especially helpful for Oregonians because of our mail-in-ballot system. Let's say for a presidential race, that I mail in my ballot 2 weeks early, because I'll be going on vacation. And then a week before the election, the candidate I voted for drops out. Now I don't get a say in which of the remaining candidates I prefer. With Ranked Choice Voting, I would! My ballot would automatically default to my second favorite candidate, preserving my vote.
2. The current first-past-the-post voting system works well for races with just two candidates, but not so well in primaries and crowded elections with many candidates. In a crowded election, similar candidates can divide each other's support, and are vulnerable to spoilers. Also, candidates can often win with far less than a majority of support. Both of these issues would be resolved if Oregon used Ranked Choice Voting, so voters wouldn't have to do mental gymnastics to decide who to cast their vote for.
3. Another reason that I support Ranked Choice Voting is because it decreases polarization. This is because political candidates have to appeal to all voters, instead of just those in their political party. If they hope to earn the 2nd place or 3rd place votes, then they shouldn't just attack the other party to win, because that would burn bridges with those voters. Instead, political candidates would likely take stances that are less controversial, and lead to more civil campaigning, so they can hopefully get ranked second by their opponents' voters. Polarization is at all time highs in the U.S. and Ranked Choice Voting can help to mitigate this issue.

When too many candidates run in an election, and especially if independent or third parties run, they act as "spoilers," and steal votes away from the frontrunners. This is a problem because voters like myself can't vote honestly for our preferred candidate, and instead have to vote for one of the two frontrunners. If I did vote for my preferred candidate instead of a frontrunner, then the front runner that I dislike the most, could end up winning. Under the current voting system, we have to choose between the lesser of two evils, instead of our honest choice. Ranked Choice Voting would fix this spoiler problem by allowing us to rank our favorite candidate first, and then our preferred front runner second, so we know we don't have to worry about wasting our vote.

Countries like Australia have used Ranked Choice Voting for over a century, and 13 million Americans already use Ranked Choice Voting in states like Alaska and Maine. I urge you to support House Bill 2004 so that Oregonians may use Ranked Choice Voting too.