EQUAL.V☆TE

My name is Sara Wolk and I'm here to urge you to join with the Association of Clerks and Secretary of State in calling for you to vote no on Ranked Choice Voting. I applaud you for prioritizing this issue, but we can do significantly better than the proposal on the table today. We owe it to reform advocates to ensure that the system we pass works as intended.

Passing a controversial reform that over-promises and under-delivers invites backlash, and undermines the efforts for more robust and modern electoral reform proposals that are currently out collecting signatures here in Oregon.

The field of electoral science has come a very long way in the 150 years since RCV was invented. I invite the legislature to convene a commission to study this issue in depth. RCV has a ton of counterintuitive impacts and propaganda and misinformation are widespread.

I'm the executive director of an Oregon nonprofit dedicated to public education on alternative voting methods, and I had the honor of publishing a peer reviewed article on this in "Constitutional Political Economy" this year.

The takeaway is that we strongly support voting reform, and there are a number of proposals that would be a step in the right direction. STAR Voting in particular is much simpler, much more accurate, much more fair, and it better combats problematic strategic voting incentives. RCV on the other hand tested roughly on par with Top Two, worse than all other alternative methods included. Our findings were consistent with other studies.

I'd like to quickly share a few facts:

1. In RCV most rankings given are never counted, including rankings which would have been relevant and could have made a difference. Specifically, if your favorite comes in 2nd place your other rankings will not be counted.

2. Large numbers of RCV ballots are voided due to voter errors, such as ranking candidates equally, and this is much worse for lower income and voters and voters of color. (One diverse Oakland precinct saw 13% of ballots overvoted in the last Oakland Mayor's race).

3. Three recent RCV elections have failed to elect the candidate preferred over all others (Alaska, Burlington, VT, and Moab, UT), and two major jurisdictions catastrophically mistallied their votes and didn't realize they had done so. (NYC added 135k test ballots to the count and Alameda county mistalled all their races by accidentally doing the RCV steps in the wrong order).

In STAR Voting all ballot data is counted. If your favorite doesn't make the runoff in STAR your vote is always still counted in the runoff, and scoring candidates equally if you like them equally is allowed. Ballots are counted using basic addition and no major changes to our voting processes or equipment would be needed.

I was a longtime advocate for RCV specifically because the talking points and goals resonated. Those talking points still resonate, but I now know that RCV does not actually behave as advertised, wastes votes, and that the tabulation is convoluted and doesn't scale well.

Voting is a sacred act and we can't afford to adopt a system that appears to be a step in the right direction, but then systematically and unnecessarily disenfranchises voters.