

Submitter: Jeffery Smith
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

June 21, 2023

Re Support for HB 2004

Chair Kate Lieber, Vice-Chair Tim Knopp, Senators Bill Hansell, James Manning Jr. and Elizabeth Steine of the Senate Committee on Rules.

My name is Nathalie Paravicini. I am writing on behalf of the Pacific Green Party in strong support of HB 2004, establishing Ranked Choice Voting statewide.

Confidence in government and elected representatives is at its lowest. Frustration and anger is growing over the amount of money poured into campaigns, as well as the resulting policies that benefit the very rich at great cost to the rest of us. Furthermore, Climate Change is going to continue fueling unexpected disruptions and tensions in society.

A measure of the dissatisfaction with the major parties is the increasing number of unaffiliated voters in Oregon and elsewhere.

It is with this backdrop that we collectively urge you to pass HB 2004. The benefits of Ranked Choice Voting are multiple. RCV:

- 1) Decreases administrative costs while improving operations, by having a mechanism to run immediate runoff calculations. It saves the money of organizing an entirely new and separate runoff election while ensuring a smooth transition with incoming administrations.

We are also spared relentless campaign advertising during runoffs.

- 2) Ensures campaigns focus more on substance than on personality or personal attacks. Candidates want to be rated #2 by their opponent's voters; decreasing the incentive for negative campaigning.

- 3) Promotes more vigorous discussion of problems and plans, by facilitating participation from more diverse voices. RCV creates the opportunity to share information, to air new ideas and unique perspectives.

Voters are thirsty for meaningful discourse, thus the increasing number of sources of information and perspectives. RCV provides an avenue to foment true dialogue with people from different perspectives, thus helping decrease conflict.

4) Allows true expression of voter's aspirations. Winner-take-all electoral systems are very antiquated and punishing. They force false choices because of the "good cop" vs "bad cop" discourse. In the experience of Green Party activists, this false choice is the single biggest barrier or demotivator to participation, regardless of political affiliation.

People are voting based on political calculation for fear of "wasting" their vote. Voters feel frustrated because they cannot express their true ideals and aspirations.

5) Motivates participation of potential candidates. The same concern about "spoiling" races by running for office follows with the antiquated "winner-take-all" way to decide elections. How can running for office spoil the process; when we desperately want more participation? Many positions go uncontested because it is so difficult to run for office in the US and in Oregon. RCV would make the system infinitely more accessible - while also decreasing costs of operation!

We are not alone in our support of this bill. This legislation is supported by a coalition of over 35 organizations, including culturally-specific organizations, labor unions, environmental groups, housing advocates, rural communities, youth-empowering organizations, and good government groups.

Ranked choice voting is a proven solution and Oregon's next step as a leader in election reform. Please support HB 2004 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Jeff Smith, Geonomy Society, author of Tom Paine's Bones