

Submitter: Aaron Day
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this important issue. As we discuss the future of our voting system, it is crucial that we make the right choices for the people of Oregon. We must ensure that the selected system is fair, secure, and truly representative of the will of the voters. Today, I would like to argue that Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is not the solution we need, and instead, we should consider alternatives like STAR Voting while allowing Oregonians to decide on their preferred voting method.

Ranked Choice Voting has been presented as a panacea for many of the problems with our current electoral system. However, the reality is that RCV often fails to deliver on its promises. A study analyzing 98 recent RCV elections from 2006 to 2019 found that over 10% of ballots were unable to be counted in the final round, either due to the order of elimination or because they were voided due to voter errors. This means that under RCV, many votes are unable to transfer to the deciding round, even if they could have made a difference. In contrast, under STAR Voting, your full vote automatically goes to the finalist you prefer, ensuring that your vote is always fully counted and makes a difference.

Furthermore, RCV does not fully eliminate vote-splitting, a core driver of polarization and the two-party domination of our current system. In RCV, competitive races with three or more viable candidates are the most likely to fail to elect the most representative winner. STAR Voting, on the other hand, counts all ballot data and completely eliminates vote-splitting.

One of the most concerning aspects of RCV is that ranking your favorite candidate first can sometimes backfire and help elect your worst-case scenario, as seen in the August 2022 Alaska Special General Election. Oregonians should not have to worry about their honest vote corrupting their intent and helping elect their least-preferred candidate.

Moreover, RCV requires centralized tabulation, which compromises election integrity and contradicts our current security measures. This centralized nature has led to issues in past elections, like the errors in the 2021 New York City Democratic Mayoral Primary and the November 2022 election in Alameda County, California. In contrast, STAR Voting is compatible with local tabulation and auditing protocols, offering a more secure alternative.

As Oregonians, we are proud of our innovative spirit. STAR Voting was invented right

here in Oregon to address the shortcomings of RCV. Currently, there is an active ballot initiative, IP-11, for STAR Voting that is collecting signatures. Passing House bill HB 2004 in support of RCV would undermine the efforts of voters across the state to decide on their preferred voting method.

We must acknowledge the flaws of RCV and not adopt a system that wastes votes and disenfranchises voters, particularly among lower-income and minority communities. Instead, we should work toward a more robust solution like STAR Voting, designed to solve the problems RCV doesn't.

In conclusion, I urge the esteemed members of the legislature to consider the concerns raised today and give the people of Oregon the opportunity to decide which voting method is best for our state. Let us come together to ensure a fair, secure, and truly representative electoral system for all Oregonians.