

RE: Support HB 2004, Statewide Ranked Choice Voting,  
Senate Committee on Rules

June 22, 2023

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Jesse Burkett and I live in Portland. I am writing to testify in support of HB 2004, a referral to the 2024 ballot that would establish ranked choice voting for statewide and federal elections.

In our current elections, fear of “vote splitting” is affecting both voters and candidates: Candidates are often deterred from entering a race for fear of splitting voter support and voters are often forced to choose a candidate with a better chance of winning, instead of the candidate they actually prefer. As a result, many Oregonians –especially people of color, working-class people, rural residents, and young people – are less incentivized to participate in our elections. With over 70% of Oregon voters “extremely” or “very” discouraged by politics, we need a solution that will empower voters by giving them a real say in our elections.

It is all too clear that at this point there is a divisiveness to politics which reduces voting to a zero sum game; few can conceive of an earnest discussion of the spectrum of issues and possible solutions when any nuance is seen only as a possible chink in the armor of a broadly preferred platform.

Moreover, the lack of ranked choice voting helps to maintain the rigid two-party arrangement, and encourages those two parties to more or less divvy up the slate of issues. To some extent there is an organic origin to some of these differences, but the cynical extent to which any issue one side immediately causes the other to court those of the other opinion as a way to pick up votes is surely not the best way to express the will of the populace.

I am far from alone in my 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 Oregon’s next step as a leader in election reform. Please support HB 2004, which will refer this critical piece of legislation to voters for the 2024 ballot, and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Jesse Burkett