

Submitter: Alex Kerr
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

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 Alex Kerr. I live in Portland, Oregon.

I've also lived in Memphis, Tennessee, where I worked in a free public elementary school for an underserved neighborhood.

I've also lived in Walla Walla, Washington, where I went to college and worked as a community organizer.

I've also lived in Larkspur, California, where I grew up and organized voter registration drives.

Everything that I've seen throughout my political life leads me to testify in strong support for 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.

Political stonewalling is a direct result of the two-party primary system that incentivizes candidates to run towards ideological extremes. It motivates voters to vote for candidates they believe are just the “lesser evil”.

Try explaining to a child that if you vote for a candidate who comes in 3rd place or worse, your vote is just discarded. Try explaining that even though we have the technology to pass your vote to your 2nd favorite candidate, we just don't do it that way. It's worse than unfair. It seeds suspicion of democracy itself. As we saw on

January 6th, those seeds are dangerous.

I am not 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,

Alex Kerr