

Submitter: Michael Ross
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice Chair Kropf, and members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Mike Ross and I live in Portland. I am writing to testify in strong support for HB 2004, which will establish ranked choice voting statewide and help ensure all Oregonians are represented in our democracy.

In our current elections, candidates in crowded races are consistently winning with less than a majority. Over half of statewide and federal races with more than two candidates won with narrow support in Oregon's 2020 and 2022 primaries[1], leaving voters feeling like their vote didn't count and unable to fully express their preferences. Fear of splitting the vote creates barriers for candidates to run and leads to voter cynicism. It's clear that our elections aren't serving voters or candidates as best as they could. Ranked choice voting is a simple improvement to our elections that will lead to more reflective elected bodies for Oregonians from every community.

We all know that despite the lies being spread by some politicians and media outlets, our elections are secure, and I'm proud of Oregon's leadership in vote-by-mail and voter turnout efforts. However, there is still a problem of voter confidence, and it's based on the perception that voters aren't REALLY free to choose the candidate they want - that between gerrymandering and the 2-party system we end up with ever more extreme, wedge-support candidates and we can only choose the one we're less repulsed by. People are tired of feeling like they're choosing between the lesser of two evils. With ranked-choice voting, people will be free to vote their true conscience without feeling like they risk spoiling the ballot and handing the election to an unacceptable candidate. It will help ensure primaries are won by candidates with broad assent, not merely the biggest minority-wedge support. That, in turn, will help ensure general elections provide real, viable choices to Oregon voters, which will boost turnout and confidence in our government. The failure of the For the People Act at the national level was an unconscionable failure on the part of a Democratic-controlled government. Please prove to your voters that Oregon can do better. Pass this bill.

I am not alone in my support of this bill. This legislation is supported by a coalition of over 30 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,
Mike Ross
he/him