

Submitter: Janice Karpenick
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3509

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB3509, which will establish ranked choice voting (RCV) as the voting method for selecting the winner of the nomination for and election to nonpartisan state offices and county and city offices except where home rule charter applies.

Our current electoral system, plurality voting, or first past the post, means the voter can choose only one candidate and the winning threshold is simply the candidate with the most votes. It is a method that encourages strategic voting when there are more than 2 candidates to prevent the "spoiler effect" - so voters are not able to select the candidate they really prefer. Winners are frequently elected with less than 50% of the vote, leaving a majority of voters dissatisfied and unrepresented. Runoffs, when needed, have low voter turnout and add expense to the system.

RCV has a proven track record for over one hundred years; it has been used in Australia since 1919. As of December 2022, 64 American jurisdictions use RCV, reaching approximately 13 million voters and includes 2 states, 2 counties and 60 cities; both Benton County and Corvallis use RCV here in Oregon. Many more jurisdictions will come on line with RCV in the next several years. Military and overseas voters cast ballots using RCV in 6 states, and it is also widely used by political parties and conventions, corporations and private organizations, and in over 80 college and university campus elections. Our own OSU began using RCV in 2014 and saw voter turnout increase by 62% as a result. Tens of millions of voters in countries around the world use RCV in their regular elections. Let us now add Oregon to this list.

RCV is an election method that addresses some of the deficiencies with our current system. Impacts of RCV, supported by data from various studies*, include:

1. Representative outcomes and majority rule - Winners often received considerably more than a 50% majority and had both strong core support and broad community support.
2. Incentivizes positive campaigning - Candidates need to engage with all voters to earn first, second, and later choices, thus discouraging negative campaigning. Data shows that voters in RCV cities report more positive campaigning.
3. More voter choice - RCV allows more than two candidates to compete without fear that like-minded candidates will split the vote.
4. Saves money by eliminating runoffs and two step elections - NY City saves

approximately \$20million and San Francisco \$3million when runoffs are avoided.

5. Broader representation - RCV promotes the representation of historically underrepresented groups, as diverse groups of voters can elect candidates of their choice.

6. Minimizes strategic voters - Voters will select the candidate they prefer, versus voting for the "lesser of two evils" because they are afraid their preferred candidate is less likely to win. RCV is strongly resistant to strategic manipulation per many election experts.

7. Increased participation from military and overseas voting - With RCV, military and overseas voters rank candidates on a single ballot. If a runoff occurs or a candidate drops out, the ranked ballot applies.

*<https://fairvote.org/resources/data-on-rcv/>

*https://www.lwvor.org/_files/ugd/628f42_1e6d65ef1c5844b896eaad8c7c8c091c.pdf

There is no perfect election system, but RCV clearly outperforms plurality voting. RCV is a non-partisan reform which gives voters more voice and more choice in our elections. RCV benefits voters more than any one political party because it promotes majority support and creates incentive for candidates to reach out to a larger audience of voters, rather than just one political base. RCV is an election system that promotes positive, inclusive, and fair elections. Representation makes our democracy stronger.

I urge you to support HB3509.

Thank you,
Janice Karpenick