

My name is Jared Garson, and I am testifying in support of House Bill 2004 as a citizen, and a lifelong oregonian.

I'm sure that some of you have watched the Oscars this week. But something you may not know, is that The Oscars gives out awards using Ranked Choice Voting. They do this because they wouldn't want a movie or actor to win just because 40% of the audience *really* liked them. If the other 60% of the audience thought the movie was awful, but there were so many other good movies to choose from, 60% of the audience's vote can get divided, leading to an unpopular and unrepresentative movie winning the award.

The same is true for elections. When too many candidates run in an election, and especially if independent or third parties run, they act as "spoilers," and steal votes away from the frontrunners. This is a problem because voters like myself can't vote honestly for our preferred candidate, and instead have to vote for one of the two frontrunners. If I did vote for my preferred candidate instead of a frontrunner, then the front runner that I dislike the most, could end up winning. Under the current voting system, we have to choose between the lesser of two evils, instead of our honest choice. Ranked Choice Voting would fix this spoiler problem by allowing us to rank our favorite candidate first, and then our preferred front runner second, so we know we don't have to worry about wasting our vote.

I would also like to clarify the issue of "exhausted ballots." An exhausted ballot is when a voter didn't rank either of the last remaining candidates, so they have no preference between the two. However, this situation still exists in our current plurality voting system, it's just called a wasted vote. By voting for only one candidate in a race, you aren't allowed to express your preference for anybody else. Therefore you are exhausting your ballot after only one vote, whereas Ranked Choice Voting gives you many more chances to not exhaust your vote. I hope that clears some misconceptions about that issue.

I was also kind of surprised to see others testify that Ranked Choice Voting decreases turnout, because I was about to testify the opposite! In states like Alaska that have adopted Ranked Choice Voting, there's a noticeable bump in turnout since adopting Ranked Choice Voting. I'm happy to share those studies with you, if you're interested.

Another issue I'd like to discuss with Ranked Choice Voting is that it's too complicated. But thankfully, you can vote exactly the same way you do now, with Ranked Choice Voting. Voters can vote for only one candidate and it will count just like it does now. The ranking feature is only for those that have a preference they wish to articulate. If you don't have one, no big deal. Just choose one!

There are two more important reasons why I support Ranked Choice Voting:

1. Ranked Choice Voting is specifically helpful to Oregonians because of our mail-in-ballot system. Let's say for a presidential race, that I mail in my ballot 2 weeks early, because I'll be out of town. And then a week before the election, the candidate I voted for drops

out and I'm screwed. Now I don't get a say in which of the remaining candidates I prefer. With Ranked Choice Voting, I do! My ballot would automatically default to my second favorite, preserving my vote.

2. Another reason that I support Ranked Choice Voting is because it decreases polarization. This is because political candidates have to appeal to all voters, instead of just those in their political party. If they hope to earn the 2nd place or 3rd place votes, then they can't just attack the other party to win, because that would burn bridges with those voters. Instead, political candidates would likely take stances that are less controversial, and lead to more civil campaigning, so they can hopefully get ranked second by their opponents' voters. Polarization in the US is at all time highs and I find myself hesitant to share my political ideologies with people that I just meet because of just how bitter politics has become. And as we're heading into the 2024 election, I think this is the most important reason that I support Ranked Choice Voting.

Ranked Choice Voting gives voters the freedom to elect candidates that are the most representative of everybody. With it, voters won't have to do mental gymnastics to decide how to strategically vote for the frontrunner - they just vote for their favorites. With Ranked Choice Voting, spoiler candidates can't fundamentally change the outcome of an election, and the winners are more representative of their voters' preferences. Ranked Choice Voting improves the mail-in-ballot system, and most importantly, can decrease polarization in Oregon.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote in support of House bill 2004. Thank you for your time.

Jared Garson