

Submitter: Steve Smith  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB2004

Testimony in opposition to HB 2004:

Now to start off, I sincerely and heartily applaud this bill's sponsors for pursuing alternative voting methods. We're all keenly aware of the partisan gridlock and venom that's polarized the state and the country, and plurality voting—the "choose one" voting method still used in most places—has played no small role in this.

One attempt to replace it is Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV), devised in its current form about 150 years ago. It was a really good idea, but it comes with issues, such as its tendency to eliminate consensus candidates, and the byzantine complexity of determining and reporting RCV results. But I want to point out what I find the most alarming of its issues: the technical term is "Lack of Monotonicity."

In a nutshell, what this means is that in RCV, your ballot can backfire, causing an effect directly opposed to your vote. By ranking one candidate HIGHER (that is, closer to your 1st choice) on your ballot, you can actually HURT their chance of winning. And the reverse is also true: By ranking a candidate LOWER on your ballot, you can HELP their chance of winning. And the more candidates in a race, the more likely this is to happen. If a voting method cannot be trusted to translate our ballots into accurate votes for the candidates we want, then it is failing to fulfill the most core purpose of an election. Please let's not join the many places where RCV was passed, then later repealed when its problems became clear.

A BRIEF AND CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE "LACK/FAILURE OF MONOTONICITY": <https://youtu.be/tJag3vuG834?t=363>

This video clearly demonstrates this problem in RCV (or "Elimination Voting" as they call it here). The whole video is worthwhile, but please watch at least the segment from 6:03 to 8:26—barely more than two minutes of your time. (And if you're hesitant to follow this link verbatim, just search YouTube for "voting paradoxes"; your first result should be the correct video from Exploratorium.)

I know we're all eager for a better voting system, but we tend to default to RCV because it's the most well-known alternative. But it's not the only alternative, and it only sporadically lives up to its claims. I encourage you to research and fact-check these claims, and see how RCV compares with other alternatives, like Approval Voting and (Oregon's own home-grown solution) STAR Voting.

I'll repeat: RCV \*was\* a really good idea, but better options exist now.

I thank the committee for their time, their kind attention, and their service to Oregon.