

Submitter: Aaron Wolf
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3509

As also submitted for HB 2004, I urge rejection of this bill not because voting reform is bad but because the elimination-round style of counting ranked choice is fundamentally flawed, and most advocates don't even understand this.

So much debate around voting and ballots is based on general impressions and biases rather than on a factual foundation. In my experience over many years of volunteering in this area, the vast majority of advocates, both individuals and organizations, do not understand the facts about ranked choice voting. What they all want in voting is what we all want. We all want the end of vote-splitting, citizens getting represented better in our governments, and parties and candidates campaigning on merits and policies rather than divisive personality attacks. Nearly everyone supporting ranked choice is doing so because they imagine that it is the best way to realistically get these results. All the support needs to be considered in this light.

Unfortunately, cynics and those with vested interest in the status quo spread fear, uncertainty, and doubt about voting reform. We must reject that cynicism. We must change our voting methods, and we must choose a system that achieves what everyone is asking for.

STAR voting is an adaptation of ranked choice that resolves the problems that ranked choice has. The main problems in ranked choice are caused by the elimination-round style of counting. Voters mark second choices that get eliminated before they get counted. When their first choice gets eliminated next, their ballots are exhausted, and their preferences are ignored. This pattern leads to cases of vote-splitting and plurality winners. STAR voting was developed specifically to solve these problems. STAR counts all the marked preferences and is much more effective at avoiding vote-splitting and electing candidates that best represent the voters.

Perfect is the enemy of the good. If ranked choice was the best realistic option, we might accept it despite the flaws (although it also has some major flaws legally and procedurally because it cannot be counted at precinct level). Too often, good policy is rejected because people insist on perfection. However, in this case, STAR voting has a strong grassroots movement right here in Oregon which is currently working to get STAR voting on the ballot for implementation.

To promote ranked choice here and now would be a tragic mistake. We can do better and we actually have the opportunity to do so. STAR voting achieves all the goals of

ranked choice and does a better job.

Lest anyone see this as a matter of opinion, please just pick any small handful of statements about ranked choice and check if the claims are factually accurate. Almost all ranked choice advocacy asserts that it guarantees majority winners, solves vote-splitting, and counts your second choice when your first choice is eliminated. All of those claims are false. Anyone who does not yet understand that they are false has been focused on the vision of the desired outcome from voting reform rather than on evaluating which methods will get us the outcome we all want.