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On Behalf Of:
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Measure: HB3509

While our traditional “first past the post” voting system serves as what many people would agree is the worst possible voting system, Ranked Choice Voting is second worst. At best. The primary pathology of our current voting system is vote splitting. Candidates with similar platforms end up drawing away votes from one another such that the winner of an election is often not the most popular, but rather the most consolidated. RCV does not fix this. If administered properly, RCV can address some forms of splitting, like true spoiler candidates with no real chance of winning an election are much less likely to sink a viable, related candidate.

But in races where there are three or more viable contenders, RCV fails. Ranking your true favorite first can often help your true favorite to win. This may sound familiar because it's the same well known shortcoming of our traditional voting method. We saw this recently in the high profile Alaska House race, where Palin ended up acting as a spoiler for Begich, even though in a head-to-head race Begich would have beat Peltola. As a long-time Democrat, I am giddy to see Peltola in that seat, but I will not kid myself that that's what best represents the desires of the people of Alaska. They were sold a false bill of goods that they could safely rank their looney favorite (Palin) first, and it would not hurt the chances of their next preferred candidate, Begich. But that is in fact what happened, and Alaskans are rightfully angry.

This is extra deceptive because RCV is billed as being “easy.” Yes, it's easy to make some ranking marks on a ballot. What could be simpler than ranking your favorite pizza toppings? But RCV is not easy to understand or reason about when it comes time to tally. Because each step of the tally only looks at a fragment of information on each ballot, the order in which candidates get eliminated and the final winner can vary wildly depending on the information in only a small number of ballots. While this chaotic opacity is often billed as making RCV “strategy resistant,” it's only because this quality makes it impossible for humans with imperfect information to reason about. This makes it much more challenging for an already suspicious populace to trust in the results.

Please drop these efforts to impose RCV statewide and further examine reform voting methods that will yield more democratic, just results. Voting methods like Approval Voting and STAR voting fix what's wrong with our traditional voting as well as what's wrong with RCV. Oregon deserves better.

Regards,
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