

RE: Support Statewide Ranked Choice Voting, HB 2004
House Committee on Rules

Chair Fahey and members of the Committee,

I'm Utah State Senator Curt Bramble and come before you as someone who opposed ranked choice voting for many years before becoming a supporter.

When conservative grassroots activists in Utah brought ranked choice voting to the Republican Party in the 1990s, I opposed it. It appeared to be a solution in search of a problem. Fast forward 25 years and I can see the many flaws in commonly used plurality voting. Plurality elections are prone to being gamed with vote splitting or spoiler candidates, rewards the politics of personal destruction, and encourages focusing on your base of support and ignoring the rest of the voters.

In Utah, with recent changes to Utah elections and new paths to the primary ballot, in 2020 four candidates faced off in each primary election for Governor (winner 36%), Congressional District 1 (winner 31%) and Congressional District 4 (winner 43.5%). While each winner won their general election, it was easy to see how plurality winners might not represent the majority of voters, so I began examining how to solve the problem and that led me to ranked choice voting, an election system already used in Utah's city election pilot.

A recent example where ranked choice voting worked is Virginia. Republicans there have a difficult time nominating the most electable candidate for the general election. In 2021, using ranked choice voting, Republicans nominated Glenn Youngkin, Winsome Sears and Jason Miyares for Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General. Evidence suggests that getting a majority of support in the nominating process allowed these candidates to unite Republicans behind them and put together a winning agenda in the general election.

When you get into election theory, researchers will run simulations that ranked choice voting might occasionally have odd outcomes. In real life elections, however, Utah winners always have been first or second on the first round outcome. Nationally, the same is true: winners almost always are first or second in the first round. And that has been over 600 public elections that have used ranked choice voting in the USA over the past 20 years.

Ranked choice voting shows great promise in Utah and Virginia and it can improve Oregon elections. Thank you.

Signed,
Senator Curt Bramble