

Submitter: Arend Peter Castelein
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3509

(fyi, I'm submitting the same written testimony to both 2004 and 3509)

I'm Arend, I'm a volunteer with the Equal Vote Coalition, and I called in to voice my opposition to House Bills 2004 and 3509. Oregon should not fast track a method with so many known flaws, and I'm particularly concerned because doing so risks hurting the voting reform movement as a whole across the country.

Ranked Choice Voting fails to deliver on a number of it's claims.

False Claim #1: "Ranked Choice Voting guarantees a majority preferred winner": That's an impossible claim since majority preferred winners won't always exist among the voter base (consider a situation with 3 candidates, and 3 voters, and each voter only decided to support 1 candidate). What RCV actually achieves is a winner with the majority of the remaining ACTIVE votes, so it only achieves a majority preferred winner by hiding votes in the final round. And These INACTIVE votes are significant, a study (<https://mainepolicy.org/project/false-majority/>) of 98 Ranked Choice Voting elections between 2006 and 2019 found that 10% of ballots weren't counted in the final round either due to the order of elimination or because of voter error.

False Claim #2: "Ranked Choice Voting mitigates the spoiler effect": Ranked Choice Voting can still exhibit the spoiler effect in close elections. If you consider an election where you're selecting between candidates Awful, Better, and Classy, you'll put C > B > A on your ballot, but if the final round is between Awful and Classy, and Awful wins then your vote will never transferred to Better. This creates very similar lesser-evil that choose one has, where you may strategically rank Better higher if you think they'll stand a better chance against Awful. Here's a short video illustrating this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtKAScORevQ>

For a real world example of both of these RCV failures, I recommend you look at the 2022 Alaska Special Election, where Palin was the spoiler candidate for Begich and Peltola ended up winning with only 48% of all votes cast (sources: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.00108> , <https://electionscience.org/commentary-analysis/rcv-fools-palin-voters-into-electing-a-progressive-democrat/>).

Another major reason to oppose RCV is that it requires centrally tabulated votes.

This creates a single point of failure when counting votes, and thus reduces the public's trust in elections. We've seen this create issues multiple times in the past few

years.

In the 2021 New York city mayoral election (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/29/nyregion/adams-garcia-wiley-mayor-ranked-choice.html>) , 135,000 test ballots were accidentally included in the final count, and they failed to catch the error. In November 2022 Alameda county (<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Alameda-County-admits-tallying-error-in-17682520.php>) tallied every single election wrong, and even certified the wrong winner in one of the races without catching the error.

This failure to catch human error in the counting process, is a failure of the voting method. STAR Voting, Approval Voting, as well as our current Choose One system, all avoid this since they're precinct summable. This means each precinct can individually tabulate their votes, and these results can then be used to validate the final result.

Oregon is already aware of this, that's why you have laws in place to guarantee a decentralized tally of the election results, enacting Ranked Choice Voting would require you to roll back this important election integrity protection.

There's no need to settle for a method with all these known failures. STAR Voting advocates are already gathering signatures for the IP-11 (<https://www.starvoting.org/star4or2024>)(<https://www.starvoting.org/star4or2024>)) ballot initiative. I urge you to give IP-11 a chance to reach the ballot, and let Oregonians decide how they want to vote for themselves