

I oppose Oregon Senate Bill 791 as it is currently written.

I strongly favor revising this bill to overcome these very serious flaws:

1. This bill, as currently worded, would disqualify ballots on which a voter ranks two or more candidates at the same ranking level. Indicating this equal preference must be a valid way to mark a ranked ballot, especially here in Oregon where everyone votes by mail.
2. The bill's wording should ensure that the only valid reason for disqualifying a ranked ballot is when it's unclear whether an oval is marked or not marked. (For example, if a voter marks a candidate at two different ranking levels, the higher rank should be counted.)
3. For reasons 1 and 2 above, the current wording would unnecessarily increase the cost of educating voters how to mark ranked ballots. Plus, ballot disqualifications are likely to more often affect voters who are already under-represented in the Oregon legislature.
4. This bill mistakenly assumes that the remaining candidate that is highest ranked on the fewest ballots is always the least-popular candidate. This flaw can be overcome. How? By using the additional information on ballots to identify a case in which a remaining candidate would lose every one-on-one competition with every other remaining candidate. When this case occurs, this "pairwise losing candidate" would be eliminated. If an elimination round does not have a pairwise losing candidate, then it is reasonable to eliminate the candidate who has the fewest transferred votes.
5. The bill includes a long convoluted sentence that needs to be split up into clearer sentences. The sentence begins: "The candidate with the fewest votes in each round in which no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast in that round is defeated, and"

The wording of Oregon House Bill 2678 is similar to this bill's wording, and I have already supplied specific suggestions for improving that bill's wording, so I can easily adapt those specific wording suggestions to this bill.

To clarify, I support the idea of using ranked ballots (rather than STAR ballots or Approval ballots), and I support eliminating one candidate at a time, but only if the eliminated candidate really is the least popular as explained above.

Who am I? I'm internationally known as the VoteFair guy, yet I've lived in Oregon since 1975. I have been educating people about better voting methods for the last three decades. My website at VoteFair.org and my book titled "Ending The Hidden Unfairness In U.S. Elections" are two of my educational efforts.

Looking farther into the future, I designed VoteFair Ranking to meet the future needs of U.S. elections (including correctly handling presidential elections). Yet I recognize that initially voters need to start with a simpler method that for learning purposes can be explained in a way that only involves stacking paper ballots.

As a clarification, please do not confuse me, the VoteFair guy, with the FairVote organization that favors the bill's current wording, which supports their hidden agenda of enlarging districts and electing more legislators from each district.

After the wording in this bill has been improved as explained above, this bill will help reduce the influence of campaign funds from out-of-state business owners, and increase the influence of all Oregon voters. In turn, this increase in democracy will enable Oregon legislators to enact laws that will dramatically increase economic prosperity throughout Oregon.

Richard Fobes

The VoteFair guy

Author of "Ending The Hidden Unfairness In U.S. Elections"

Author of "The Creative Problem Solver's Toolbox" which has been published around the world in ten languages

Subject-matter expert for the Ranked Choice Oregon ballot initiative