

March 16, 2021

To: Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner Senate Committee on Rules

Re: SB 791 Testimony (1) – RCV State/county/city/ major party use

I am writing in support of SB 791.

As a resident of Benton County, I participated in a ranked-choice election for County Commissioner in November, 2020. The voting process was easy to understand and satisfying as a voter who was choosing among three candidates from three different political parties.

In particular, I would ask that you consider these positives associated with ranked-choice voting.

* Relief from the marginalizing effect of “being primaried”. In order to help correct the existing extremism in electoral politics, ranked-choice voting allows voters to select candidates that reflect their concerns.

* A chance to return to a more bi-partisan legislative process. The Oregon legislature has suffered from gridlock recently from a strong divide in partisanship.

* Antidote to voter suppression. At a time when many states are pursuing voter suppression, ranked-choice voting goes the other way – encouraging full participation by all voters and a full range of candidates.

* Easy to understand. If you can choose your favorite pizza toppings from a list of ingredients, you can successfully vote in a ranked-choice election.

Consider the importance of voting one's conscience that we saw recently by Alaska Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski in Washington DC. As Jeanette Lee of Sightline reported, *Ranked Choice Voting gave Senator Lisa Murkowski political safety to break from Trump...demanding a presidential resignation and talking openly about leaving the Republican party—(this) coincides with Alaska voters adopting new open primary and ranked-choice voting systems last November. Alaska's election reforms grant Murkowski even more freedom to follow her conscience and be pragmatic... When Murkowski comes up for re-election in 2022, Alaska's new open primary format will send the top four candidates on to compete in the ranked choice general. Voters can then rank as many or as few of the top four as they wish. The first candidate to win a majority of active ballots wins the seat. The new system has essentially liberated Murkowski from the risk of being outflanked by extreme partisans in a closed party primary...Alaska and Maine, the first states to adopt ranked choice voting, are leading the way in ensuring our elected officials are beholden to the broadest swath of their state's voters, not the most radicalized.* The full article can be found at <https://www.sightline.org/2021/01/22/ranked-choice-voting-frees-electeds-to-side-step-party-lockstep/>

Thank you for receiving my testimony.

Marjorie Stevens
Corvallis, OR

c: Senator Michael Dembrow, Senator Jeff Golden, and Representative Dan Rayfield, sponsors of SB 791