

I support the implementation of ranked ballots for voting as supported in this bill. However I feel this bill has certain flaws which need to be addressed before it should have the support of the legislature.

The first correction I would make is to add a safety net to ensure that the vote elects the most popular candidate. As written this bill could have the same result as the Burlington 09 election and elect the least popular candidate. A simple safety net by way of eliminating the pairwise loser before the runoff would prevent this.

The second correction I would make is a provision that accounts for how to handle multiple marks for one candidate. This could happen if a voter makes a mistake or fails to fully erase a mark. Because Oregon voters by mail there is no one there to ensure every ballot is marked just so, and while education is necessary, mistakes can and will happen. My suggestion would be to not count these as spoiled ballots but to count the voter's highest ranking as their intended vote. This offers the least damaging result to their ballot without disenfranchising them.

The third correction would be to allow voters to mark multiple candidates at the same level. This allows a ballot to have fewer ranks than there may be candidates, which becomes impractical in terms of elections such as Portland Commissioner Position 2 (2020) and the California gubernatorial recall election (2003) which had 135 candidates. It also allows voters to say that they can't differentiate between two candidates but approve them at the same level. The counting for equal ranked candidates is not computationally expensive, and allows voters the greatest expression of preference. These high-candidate elections are rare, but they do happen and the method should account for them without ceasing a system that is costly to implement or confusing for voters, and without forcing a voter to count one candidate as higher or lower than another.

I believe that this bill and HB 2678 should be adjusted accordingly and would in that way better serve Oregon voters than the bills as currently written, and better than the STAR or Approval voting method alternatives. There are still ways to make the bill better and I would welcome the opportunity to speak to those, but adjusting and then subsequently adopting these two bills is good for the people of Oregon and I am proud to live in a state where the legislature is considering them.

I'm sorry I cannot provide verbal testimony as my job requires me to travel.

Joseph Hoffman  
Chief petitioner for the Ranked Choice Oregon Ballot Initiative.