

Senators,

I have been researching alternative voting methods for years, and have presented to numerous organizations including the League of Women Voters. I was a co-founder and long-time board member with the Center for Election Science, a non-profit which studies and advocates for better voting methods.

This bill would mandate a specific type of ranked voting known as instant runoff voting, or "IRV" for short. Most experts in the field believe that simpler and more transparent alternatives such as STAR voting, score voting, and approval voting lead to election results which more accurately reflect the will of the people.

Approval voting uses standard ballots and voting machines, and merely removes the one-candidate limit, allowing voters to select as many candidates as they approve of. This method of voting was adopted by two-to-one majorities in both Fargo, ND and St Louis, MO, and has been used successfully in both. It is simpler and more transparent than IRV, and has important game theoretical properties which resist tactical voting behavior. Here is some analysis from the Center for Election Science.

<https://electionscience.org/library/approval-voting-versus-irv/>

STAR voting is a newer voting method, in the same family as approval voting—scored (rated) voting methods as opposed to ordered (ranked) methods like IRV. It always completes in two rounds, unlike IRV, which can go on for numerous rounds of elimination. It is simpler and more transparent than IRV. And it more accurately reflects the will of the voters, as measured via mathematical analysis and computer simulation studies. It has also been used in large public elections such as the primary for the Independent Party of Oregon.

While virtually all reform advocates wish to see our current choose-one "plurality voting" method abolished, a substantial number of them believe that the IRV method mandated by SB 791 is deeply flawed. A better option, more consistent with democratic choice, would be to ban the use of plurality voting, and give municipalities their choice of which alternative to use, with some recommended vetted options, which could include IRV, STAR voting, approval voting, and perhaps a few others. This would be in line with the "laboratory of democracy" idea, and would create competition to allow Oregonians to discover the best voting procedures based on real world evidence over time.

Voting reformers widely disagree on the best alternative voting method, but they nearly unanimously agree that the choose-one status quo is the worst voting method in use. Simply abolish the choose-one plurality voting (aka "first-past-the-post") method of voting, and let counties democratically choose whether to adopt approval voting, STAR voting, instant runoff voting, or some other procedure from the long list of alternatives promoted by experts.

Regards,  
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