

Submitter: Caz Novak
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Committee on Rules,
My name is Caz Novak, and I am a resident of SW Portland.

I am writing to testify in strong support for HB 2004, a referral to the 2024 ballot that would establish ranked choice voting for statewide and federal elections.

In our current elections, fear of “vote splitting” is affecting both voters and candidates: Candidates are often deterred from entering a race for fear of splitting voter support and voters are often forced to choose a candidate with a better chance of winning, instead of the candidate they actually prefer. As a result, many Oregonians – especially people of color, working-class people, rural residents, and young people – are less incentivized to participate in our elections. With over 70% of Oregon voters “extremely” or “very” discouraged by politics, we need a solution that will empower voters by giving them a real say in our elections.

In my own experience, there have been many times where I have felt the need to support a candidate with whom I do not strongly align in order to prevent a second candidate, whom I view as potentially more dangerous, from being elected. In these situations, voting does not feel like the powerful civic act that it should. If given a chance to rank my candidates of preference, I believe my voice would be heard more fully- I would not have to vote for a candidate I do not feel particularly favorable towards simply because there are not other viable options. Furthermore, the full spectrum of voters' ideology would be more fully encapsulated with ranked choice voting, and every person's vote would truly matter more. This, I feel, is an essential element of democracy- the more an individual's voice is recognized in the halls of power, the better our government functions.

I am not alone in my support of this bill. This legislation is supported by a coalition of over 35 organizations, including culturally-specific organizations, labor unions, environmental groups, housing advocates, rural communities, youth-empowering organizations, and good government groups.

Ranked choice voting is Oregon’s next step as a leader in election reform. Please support HB 2004, which will refer this critical piece of legislation to voters for the 2024 ballot, and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,