

Submitter: Benjamin Barefield  
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 Ben Barefield and I live in Bend. 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.

Ranked choice voting has a number of benefits. Not only does it improve our Democracy by allowing voters to better choose the candidates they like, it has been shown to improve the tone of politics. Without a winner-take-all binary system, candidates are more likely to talk about the issues they care about, and what their stance, rather than attack their opponents.

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.

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. Not to mention all of the modern democracies around the world that use a ranked choice system.

Ranked choice voting is Oregon’s next step as a leader in election reform and a vital step in making for a more perfect union. 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,  
Ben Barefield  
He/Him