

Submitter: Steven Smith
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

I am writing to testify in opposition to HB 2004. However, I heartily applaud the motives behind HB 2004; the objectives of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) -- such as lessening of political polarization, unseating the two-party duopoly, and (most importantly) allowing the voters to safely and confidently support their honest preferences (not their strategic "lesser evils") -- are immensely laudable. However, RCV will not achieve these goals.

RCV was a good idea 150 years ago, but has been repeatedly passed and later repealed when its problems became clear. While voting under RCV is simple enough, most voters do not understand how RCV ballots are counted, and this process is very prone to misfires. For a simple example, I would direct you to the YouTube video, "Voting Paradoxes | Exploratorium" (by Exploratorium). Of course you are welcome to view the whole video, but I would direct you specifically to watch 6:41 - 8:26 (less than 2 minutes of your time), which illustrates a particularly alarming flaw in how vote-counting can unfold in RCV (or "elimination voting," as this video calls it). This kind of misfire that flouts the will of the electorate has no place in Oregon elections (nor in any place calling itself a democracy).

And we do have other options! Oregon's own home-grown innovation, *STAR voting* is simpler, more transparent, and far more effective than RCV at producing results that reflect the voters' honest majority preference. Signatures are being gathered right now to bring a STAR voting measure to Oregon ballots, so the passage of HB 2004 would undermine these grass-roots efforts -- hobbling a great and innovative reform (STAR) in favor of a problematic and outmoded one (RCV) that's bound to get stymied by technical and legal hurdles. Oregon's own election officials have recently testified that RCV would be a technical nightmare for the security and transparency of Oregon's elections.

Please look beyond the hype surrounding RCV: Fact-check its claims, compare it with newer and simpler alternatives (like Approval Voting and of course STAR), and I think you'll see the wisdom in voting NO on HB 2004.

My thanks for your time and your service to Oregon.