

Submitter: Sushruta Chandramouli  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB3509

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the Committee,

I urge you to support HB 3509, which will enable the use of the ranked choice voting method for Oregon elections where applicable.

Ranked choice voting is a tested and true voting system used in more than 20 jurisdictions including cities, counties, and states, housing more than 9.2 million voting age citizens in the United States, and interest is growing. Here in Oregon, RCV is already used in Benton County and Corvallis City elections. And right now as we speak, Portland has a slate of charter amendments that have been cleared to go to voters in November that includes RCV for city elections.

I believe we all share the same belief that American democracy is strongest when more voices are heard. Unfortunately, under the current system, the spoiler effect is prevalent, where similar candidates split the vote and as a result, an unpopular opponent can win with very little support. Voters are ultimately left with restricted choice, and candidates, especially those from under-represented communities are discouraged from running. RCV solves this issue by allowing more than two candidates to compete without fear of “splitting the vote” among like-minded voters. And voters can honestly rank candidates in order of choice without worrying about how others will vote and which candidates are more or less likely to win. With RCV, candidates also compete for second choice votes from their opponents’ supporters which lessens the incentive for negative campaigning.

RCV can also promote the representation of historically under-represented groups. Cities with RCV have better overall electoral outcomes for women and people of color. Over the last decade, women have won 48% of all municipal ranked choice elections. As of 2020, nearly half of all mayors (46%) and city council seats (49%) decided by RCV are held by women. In comparison, women comprise only a quarter (23%) of mayors in non-RCV jurisdictions. Four bay area cities including San Francisco that adopted RCV not only saw increases in the percentage of women and candidates of color winning, but also running for office. According to a 2018 study, there was a 9 point increase in underrepresented candidates running, and more than a 14% increase in the probability that a female candidate of color will win office. In these cities, prior to RCV, only 38% of elected municipal candidates were people of color. Now that number is 68%.

RCV also saves money by doing away with costly primaries and runoffs, which will

allow taxpayer money to be allocated to other programs.

With all five ballot measures on RCV referred to voters in 2021 passing across the country, it's clear that RCV is popular and being adopted left and right.

Thank you for your time, and please support the passage of HB3509.

Thank you,  
Sushruta Chandramouli