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On Behalf Of: the VoteFair guy  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB3509

Strong support for HB 3509, Nonpartisan Ranked Choice Voting

Testimony from Richard Fobes, "the VoteFair guy"

I strongly support HB 3509 for the same reasons I support HB 2004. I've already uploaded that testimony to the HB 2004 testimony area so I won't repeat it here. For convenience I've also put a copy here:

[http://www.rankedchoiceoregon.org/house\\_bill\\_2004\\_testimony.pdf](http://www.rankedchoiceoregon.org/house_bill_2004_testimony.pdf)

I see that some of the opposition against HB 3509 is from people who are trying to promote STAR voting. So I'll repeat the point that the first step in STAR voting is to interpret the STAR ballot as a "rating" ballot instead of a "ranked" ballot, and no significant governmental election anywhere in the world uses rating ballots (because they violate the principle of "one person one vote").

The obvious difference between HB 3509 and HB 2004 is that political parties are not involved in nonpartisan elections, which is what HB 3509 is about. As a result, HB 3509 does not involve any risk to either the Republican party or the Democratic party. This means it's less controversial than HB 2004.

Otherwise, the main difference between the two bills is that HB 3509 opens the door to using the multi-winner version of ranked choice voting in city-council elections. This is the kind of election system that will be used in Portland in 2023. In that case there will be four districts and each district will elect three city-council members.

Admittedly the multi-winner version of ranked choice voting (which is academically named "the single transferable vote") is confusing.

To clear up the many confusions that arose during the 2022 election-season debate about Portland's Charter Amendment I wrote the following FAQ webpage:

[https://www.rankedchoiceoregon.org/charter\\_yes.html](https://www.rankedchoiceoregon.org/charter_yes.html)

In online discussions I saw two common misunderstandings about multi-winner ranked choice voting.

One misunderstanding is that some people think a single ballot could help to elect

more than one of the three candidates. (Another city might choose a different number of seats for each district.) The FAQ (referenced above) clarifies that when a ballot has helped to elect one candidate, that ballot basically is set aside and ignored when the remaining seats are filled.

The other misunderstanding is about the threshold level. For a three-seat district it's 25 percent. Many voters claimed that a candidate getting only 25 percent support does not deserve to represent that district. The FAQ clarifies that the 25 percent support for the first-seat winner is combined with another 25 percent support for the second-seat winner and combined with the remaining 25 percent support for the third-seat winner. As a result the three elected representatives who represent their district are guaranteed to have at least 75 percent support. ( $25 + 25 + 25 = 75$ ) This is much higher than a single-seat election system, which only guarantees 50 percent support for the single winner.

I was surprised to see so few testimony submissions in support of HB 3509. Then I learned there are reasons some organizations are refraining from officially expressing support here.

I won't pretend to speak for anyone else, yet I can testify that there are a huge number of election-method reform advocates who will appreciate this bill also being sent to the House and signed into law along with HB 2004.

If I had known about this public hearing sooner than two days ago I would have been able to broadcast this opportunity to the many election-method advocates I'm networked with.

As it is, I'm barely getting this typed on the morning of the day of your afternoon meeting. And I'm running into the character limit for text submissions.

So I'll close by repeating that my testimony in PDF form in support of HB 2004 also applies to HB 3509.

In advance, thank you for wisely helping to increase economic prosperity throughout Oregon.

Richard Fobes

The VoteFair guy