



March 16, 2023

House Committee on Rules  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony in Support House Bill 2004**

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice-Chair Kropf, and members of the House Committee on Rules,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 supporters statewide.

**We strongly support House Bill 2004, which would establish ranked choice voting statewide and help ensure all Oregonians are represented in our democracy.**

At the ACLU of Oregon, our work to defend and advance civil liberties and civil rights is fundamentally intertwined with creating a more effective, functional, and inclusive democracy of all the people. Ranked choice voting (RCV) in Oregon for statewide and federal races would make our democracy more inclusive and accessible by giving all voters more choice when filling out their ballot.

Ranked choice voting creates opportunities for first-time candidates and candidates from diverse backgrounds to run for office. By mitigating concerns of “splitting the vote,” ranked choice voting allows a broader—and more representative—range of candidates and, ultimately, elected officials. Cities that have switched to RCV elections have seen more women, people of color, working class people, and young people not only run for office but win.

Ranked choice voting fosters electoral races focused on issues and policy as the system disincentivizes negative campaigns. In addition to the intrinsic benefit of electoral races based on policy issues, this shift may help counter the gender gap in elected office, as studies show negative campaigns may dissuade women from running for office.<sup>1</sup>

Ranked choice voting helps alleviate voters’ concerns that they must consider how others vote before casting their own ballot. RCV grants voters greater power to express their preferences and vote for candidates whose values they most share. Allowing voters to rank candidates

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *Why Are Women Still Not Running for Public Office?*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2008); Kristin Kanthak and Jonathan Woon, “Women Don’t Run? Election aversion and candidate entry,” *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (July 2015): 595–612; John, Smith, and Zack, “The Alternative Vote.

encourages more participation in voting and means that their vote becomes more meaningful and impactful. Ultimately, this leads to outcomes that voters are more satisfied with.

By enabling a more diverse candidate pool and more sincere voting choices, ranked choice voting yields electoral outcomes that are more representative of Oregonians. Winners will be more likely to have broad, sincere support from their constituents.

The passage of House Bill 2004 is a welcome, vital step for a thriving and representative democracy in Oregon and the federal government. **The ACLU of Oregon urges your support for House Bill 2004 and asks you to pass it out of committee.**

Respectfully,

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