

Submitter: Matthew Severance  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3166

Dear Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

My name is Matthew Severance, and I am a resident of Salem. I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 3166, which would require the Secretary of State to establish ranked-choice voting in Oregon. As a voter who values clarity, fairness, and the will of the people, I believe this bill undermines the democratic process and disregards the voices of Oregonians who have already spoken on this issue.

First and foremost, Oregon voters rejected ranked-choice voting in a recent election. This decision was not ambiguous—it was a clear signal that the majority of us prefer to keep our current voting system, which is straightforward and easy to understand. By pushing HB3166 forward, this legislature risks ignoring the will of the people, which is the very foundation of representative government. Why should lawmakers override a choice we've already made at the ballot box? Democracy demands that you respect our vote, not circumvent it.

Beyond this fundamental issue, ranked-choice voting itself poses practical problems that could harm Oregon's elections. The system is unnecessarily complex, requiring voters to rank candidates in order of preference rather than simply choosing one. This complexity could confuse voters, especially those who are elderly, have limited English proficiency, or lack the time to research every candidate in detail. Studies from other places that have tried ranked-choice voting, like New York City, have shown lower voter turnout in some communities and instances of "ballot exhaustion," where votes are discarded because rankings aren't completed properly. Do we really want to risk disenfranchising Oregonians with a system that's harder to use?

Additionally, ranked-choice voting doesn't guarantee a fairer outcome. Supporters claim it reduces partisanship, but it can just as easily lead to unpredictable results where a candidate with broad initial support loses to someone who wasn't most voters' first choice. This could frustrate voters and erode trust in our elections. Our current system—where the candidate with the most votes wins—is transparent and intuitive. Why fix what isn't broken?

Finally, implementing HB3166 would come at a cost—both financial and logistical. Updating voting machines, retraining election staff, and educating the public would drain taxpayer dollars at a time when Oregon faces pressing needs like housing, education, and infrastructure. We should be investing in solutions that unite us, not experimenting with a voting system that divides us further.

I urge you to listen to Oregon voters and reject HB3166. We've already said no to ranked-choice voting. Let's keep our elections simple, fair, and reflective of the people's will. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Matthew Severance