RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Support HB 2678

We are a growing coalition of community-based organizations, and community members that are striving to create an Oregon that is representative of all and where we have the rights, resources, and recognition we need to thrive.

THE PROBLEM

Democracy should represent all the people it serves. While Oregon is a leader in the mechanics of voting, we can continue our tradition of being the national leader on democracy by upgrading our elections themselves. Our current electoral system often favors candidates with greater access to resources - making it difficult for grassroots, community-driven candidates to get elected. These systems can also result in candidates getting elected to office with less than 50% of the vote meaning most voters end up represented by someone they didn't vote for. In the 2020 primaries in races with more than two candidates, over ⅔ of the races saw the majority of people vote against the winner.

THE SOLUTION

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a simple upgrade to how we vote that provides voters with more choices and includes more voices. It reduces barriers for voters eliminating the spoiler effect and forces us to choose who “can win” and guarantees that winning candidates have always received more than half the vote. It also reduces barriers to entry and allows greater participation by both voters and candidates.

Used by more than 10 million people in six states and dozens of cities and counties across the United States (including Benton County), RCV lets people rank candidates in the order they prefer. To win, a candidate must receive more than 50% of the vote. If no candidate gets 50%, an “instant runoff” occurs where the ballots for the last-place candidate are instantly recounted for the voters’ second choice. Simply put, RCV means candidates must compete for support from all voters and no community can be ignored.

OUR PROPOSAL: HB 2678

HB 2678 brings RCV to Oregon by 1) Using RCV in all partisan primaries and 2) Replacing nonpartisan primaries and with an RCV general election in November (except for counties in which home rule applies).

Under our current system of voting twice a year, turnout in nonpartisan primaries are substantially lower and skew wealthier and whiter than nonpartisan general election races. Combining the primary and general into a ranked ballot ensures the majority of voices are heard on important issues.
WHY RCV SHOULD BE THE STANDARD

RCV CREATES A MORE REFLECTIVE DEMOCRACY BY INCREASING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND IT GREATLY HELPS BRIDGE THE GENDER GAP

Case studies show people of color are more likely to win elected positions when RCV is implemented. In the case study of, “four Bay Area cities that use RCV (San Francisco, San Leandro, Oakland, and Berkeley), candidates of color have won 62% of RCV races, compared to only 38% prior to RCV.” The number of women that run and win has gone from 25% to 49% in cities that have adopted RCV as well. This is because RCV reduces the barriers to entry for new candidates in races without an incumbent.

EXPANDS VOTER CHOICE

RCV ensures that Oregonians have the freedom to vote for who they really want. In our current system, if your favorite candidate is unlikely to win, you have two bad choices: (1) cast a “safe” vote for one of the front-runners to avoid electing whom you like least, or (2) “waste” your vote on your favorite. Voters shouldn’t be forced into a lose-lose dilemma. RCV lets you vote for who you truly support.

REWARDS CONSENSUS CANDIDATES OVER SPLINTER CANDIDATES AND ELIMINATES THE SPOILER EFFECT

Our current system often rewards candidates in multi-candidate races that appeal to a narrow group of voters, and who run polarizing and negative campaigns. RCV rewards candidates that run on issues, consensus and coalition-building. Under RCV, a candidate must appeal to 50%+1 of the electorate in order to succeed. This reform is most needed in races that attract a large number of candidates. Under our current “plurality” system, candidates can win despite most people voting for someone else. RCV guarantees the election of majority winners, whose support extends beyond a narrow base, by requiring the winner to have more than 50% of the vote.

FAQ’S

HOW DOES RCV IMPACT THE VOTING POWER OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR?

People of color have won far more seats since their cities started using RCV. RCV eliminates low-turnout runoffs and non-partisan primaries, making it so voters only have to focus on one election more reflective of the full electorate. RCV allows for coalition-building among community groups without fear of a split vote.

WHAT ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS OF VOTING (E.G. STAR VOTING)?

While no electoral system is perfect, RCV is a simple, proven method to give voters more choices, is complementary to future democracy reforms (e.g. expansion of voter registration, proportional representation, etc.), and elects more diverse candidates than our current method. Alternative methods of voting such as STAR, have not been implemented in any election across the nation, thus it’s not known how it would perform in improving equitable outcomes of elections, or how voters, especially communities of color, will behave with it.

2. Rank the Vote. Ranked Choice Voting in Represenation.
3. Oregon Ranked Choice Voting. Why RCV?

QUESTIONS?

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