



OREGON STATE SENATE
900 COURT STREET ST NE
SALEM, OREGON 97301

June 25, 2023

Secretary of the Senate

Vote Explanation: HB 2004 B – Ranked Choice Voting

Secretary Brocker,

I have serious concerns about ranked choice voting (RCV). I worry about how it will be implemented and the voter education needed in order for it to be implemented well. I have heard from folks in other jurisdictions who voted to adopt RCV and now wish they hadn't. All that notwithstanding, I have concerns about RCV inherently. I understand that proponents believe it will better represent the will of the voters. I am concerned that at a time when the validity of elections is already being erroneously questioned, we are going to implement a new voting system.

I and the proponents of RCV agree that we need to increase voter participation and engagement. RCV proponents assert that RCV will help do this. Many organizations whom I support are supporting the RCV effort and I recognize their sincere belief that this will help. I have my doubts. I worry that implementing a new system is only going to make voting less accessible to exactly the communities of folks we need to be more engaged. Beyond my concerns of how RCV will directly affect the engagement of marginalized communities, I am concerned that it may be viewed as the solution to the lack of engagement by these communities and, as a result, serious efforts won't be made to meaningfully engage folks. So even if RCV does help, I'm worried it will be at the cost of not continuing or increasing other beneficial – likely more beneficial – efforts of community engagement.

I am also worried that we are moving the goalposts of what it means to be a successful candidate. Marginalized communities have struggled for the entirety of our state's – and our country's – history to get their folks elected. It's only in the very recent past that these communities have finally been able to participate and start to overcome the institutional disadvantages they have had in "playing the game," as it were. Now, we are redefining the rules of the game. These are the same concerns I have whenever we look at any sort of election reform. I recognize the need for reform, and I fully support the principles of election reform of all sorts, but when it comes to the specific vehicles of reform, I urge more caution than is usually considered. Folks like to assert that whatever their reform is will benefit these marginalized communities, often without recognizing this aspect – without recognizing that we are essentially changing the rules of the game that those communities were already kept out of for centuries while they are just starting to be able to overcome those obstacles.

Again, I recognize that many of the organizations I trust and respect that represent these communities are supporting HB 2004. That is one of the reasons why I voted yes. This is also a referral to the people, and I believe that is the right thing to do here. We, as legislators, are elected to make big, meaningful decisions on

behalf of the people of our state, and I take that duty to heart, but there are times when a referral is appropriate, and this is one of them. I am not so opposed to this measure that I would stand in the way of it getting its chance in front of the voters. While that does not mean I will vote for it on my ballot – I’m not sure if I will at this point – I am not going to stop it from getting there.

I also thank the proponents for their meaningful engagement. My office can be a bit wonky and we peppered the RCV proponents with all sorts of questions about various details as we sought to better understand the specifics of the bill. They were always willing to engage thoughtfully – and did so with smiles. I do not doubt their intentions – I truly believe that they believe that RCV will deliver all the positive outcomes they say it will. And I share those goals, so I do genuinely hope they are right. I have my doubts, but they are not convictions. So despite the concerns I shared, for the reasons above, I voted a courtesy yes on HB 2004 B. Again, I thank the proponents for their meaningful engagement. While their answers to questions from my office did not always alleviate concerns, they were thorough, honest, forthcoming, and always responsive. This was also among the reasons I voted yes. And I hope the proponents will keep me and my office involved in this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lew Frederick", written in a cursive style.

Lew Frederick

Senate Majority Whip | District 22 – N/NE Portland