

Public testimony was submitted to the Multnomah County Charter Commission Equitable Representation Subcommittee which asked the subcommittee to not recommend STAR voting.

First of all, I want to thank James for taking the time to investigate voting methods and write up his critique. It is very encouraging to see how many people are researching this topic and advocating for good methods in the last few years.

However, there were two flaws in his argument. Before I get to that, here is a summary of his argument:

- He favors getting rid of [FPTP](#) elections.
- The [best-known form of RCV](#) is not perfect, but pretty good in his opinion.
- He is opposed to [STAR](#) because of the way it tracks strength of support instead of preference order. (Note: This is not strictly true, which I will get into in a moment.)

James provided an example of an election that he believed demonstrated a flaw with STAR voting. However, he tabulated the second round incorrectly, so his conclusion about who would win is incorrect. ([Click here for a video on how STAR voting works.](#))

His argument states the following premise:

- 9 voters vote as follows: 5 stars for Donnie, 0 stars for Bernie, 0 stars for Joe
- 3 voters vote as follows: 0 stars for Donnie, 5 stars for Bernie, 2 stars for Joe
- 8 voters vote as follows: 0 stars for Donnie, 2 stars for Bernie, 3 stars for Joe

He noted that in a FPTP election Donnie would win due to vote-splitting between Bernie and Joe supporters. He also noted that in an RCV election, Joe would win due to Bernie supporters' votes transferring to Joe after Bernie is eliminated. ([Click here for a video on how ranked choice voting works.](#))

Now to the STAR election:

Round 1 score totals:

Donnie: 45 stars
Bernie: 31 stars
Joe: 30 stars

The two candidates with the highest scores are finalists. In this election, it is Donnie and Bernie. (Click [here](#) to see a spreadsheet with all of the data.)

Round 2 runoff:

James incorrectly stated that the runoff would compare Donnie's score (45) to Bernie's score (31) and grant the win to Donnie. However, this is not how STAR voting works. Such a runoff would be meaningless, as it would simply repeat the findings of the scoring round (making this election effectively function as plain [Score voting](#)).

In actuality, in the runoff round, STAR voting compares the *number* of voters who preferred each finalist to whom. In this way, it addresses James' concerns about voters getting to express their preferences. STAR voting measures both strength of support (round 1) and number of supporters

(round 2).

When run correctly, STAR finds Bernie as the winner of this election:

11 voters preferred Bernie to Donnie

9 voters preferred Donnie to Bernie

The second flaw in James' example is that it doesn't make clear why all of the Joe supporters only gave a score of 3 to their favorite candidate, while all other voters gave a 5 to their favorite candidate. For Joe supporters to get their favorite candidate to win, all they need to do is increase the score they give to Joe. Since Joe supporters make up the vast majority of the Joe-Bernie coalition (which makes up the majority of voters in this electorate), this result would make sense for this election.

To see a spreadsheet comparing the STAR and RCV results of this theoretical election, as well as some analysis of how Donnie voters might attempt to affect the outcome, click here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1H3BOOFN_yZmLL9C1L1QcZv9Mfx4w6isp1JdtwaiY8Qs/e/dit?usp=sharing

Thanks,
Annie Kallen

For reference, here is the full text of the submitted public comment:

"I strongly favor getting rid of "first past the post" (FPP) ways of determining winners of elections. Among alternatives are Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) which, in its best-known form is not perfect; there are a number of alternatives that do slightly better, but RCV is usually pretty good and no voting system can be perfect. I am strongly opposed to STAR and, frankly, bewildered that anybody purporting to favor equity would support it. STAR is in stark violation of what I consider to be the cardinal principle of fair elections that each voter's preference should count the same as each other voter's preference. Because STAR is based upon how passionate voters are about candidates, the passions of a few can outweigh the preferences of the many. Here is an example. Consider an election with three candidates, who I will suggestively name Donnie, Bernie, and Joe. For simplicity, assume that there are 20 voters—multiplying that number by any constant does not change the point of the example. Nine voters are true believers in Donnie and give him five stars, while giving both Bernie and Joe zero stars. Three voters are true believers in Bernie and award him five stars. They detest Donnie and give him zero stars. Joe is regarded as a poor second-best and receives 2 stars from these voters. Finally, eight voters see the benefits and flaws of both Joe and Bernie, and on margin prefer Joe to Bernie, giving the former three stars and the latter two stars. These voters give zero stars to Donnie. Note that in an FPP election, Donnie wins, with 9 votes against 8 for Joe and 3 for Bernie. In an RCV election, Bernie is the gets the fewest number of first choices and Joe beats Donnie in the instant runoff, 11 to 9. In STAR, Bernie gets a total of 31 stars (15 from Bernie supporters, 16 from Joe supporters, and none from Donnie supporters), Joe gets a total of 30 stars (24 from Joe supporters, 6 from Bernie supporters, and none from Donnie supporters), and Donnie gets 45 stars (all from his own supporters). In the automatic runoff, Donnie (highest number of stars) loses to Bernie (second highest number of stars). So Bernie wins even though 8 of 11 voters who

see a difference between the two prefer Joe. Preferences, not passions, are what elections should be about.

James Kahan”