

NEWS

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

MARK FROHNMAYER,
ALAN ZUNDEL AND
HALLIE ROBERTS
COLLECT SIGNATURES
FOR STAR VOTING



PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

CHANGING THE BALLOT

Local group seeks to transform the way we vote

Your average Democrat and even your average Republican probably isn't entirely satisfied with how the 2016 presidential election turned out. Did you vote for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump because you liked the candidate or because you saw them as the lesser of two evils? (Yes, we realize the average *Eugene Weekly* reader probably didn't vote for Trump.)

Mark Frohnmayer, a Eugene-based entrepreneur known for his Arcimoto electric car company, is also the founder of the Equal Vote Coalition. He's looking to change the electoral process, and he's starting with the Lane County Commission.

Frohnmayer and political scientist Alan Zundel are the chief petitioners for a Lane County ballot measure that would change the way elections run here. The effort is

called STAR voting, which stands for Score Then Automatic Runoff, and the campaign needs 11,506 votes by late June to get onto the ballot.

The campaign has its official kickoff March 2 at Hi-Fi Music Hall, but the efforts to make elections more accurate have been in process for several years. Back in 2013, Frohnmayer petitioned statewide for a unified primary system. In 2014, the Equal Vote Conference was held at the University of Oregon, and out of discussions there among elections critics and experts, STAR voting was born.

In talking about the Lane County effort, Frohnmayer manages to walk a line between the precision of a policy wonk and the enthusiasm of an evangelist as he lays out the idea: STAR voting eliminates the need for a primary election, thus saving the government as well as candidates money. Essentially, voters would rank candidates based on how much support they would give them, from none to full support.

For example, in 2016 a voter would have been able to give full support to Bernie Sanders but maybe three out of five points possible to Hillary Clinton.

All scores for all the candidates are added up. Then an automatic runoff ensues between the two highest-scoring candidates. Rather than run another election and have you to vote again, in the runoff, your full vote is assigned to

whomever of the top two that you rated higher.

Frohnmayer ticks off some of the advantages: The campaign season for a November election would mainly take place in the summer, not winter for a May primary when people are knocking on doors in the Oregon wet and cold; third party candidates get more footing; candidates don't have to toe the party line; and there's no incentive to vote against a candidate you truly favor.

Voters express not only their approval for a candidate, he explains, but their level of approval.

Hallie Roberts is campaign manager for STAR voting. She says when discussing STAR voting, people often bring up campaign cash, as that's the first problem they see. Roberts says that Equal Vote believes STAR voting "will be an amazing first step to getting the financial hand out of politics."

Frohnmayer says both progressives and conservatives he's talked with have shown interested in STAR voting, and he's spoken to members of the Lane County Commission about the process. There is also an effort to get STAR voting on the ballot in Multnomah County. ■

The STAR voting petition kickoff is 8 pm Friday, March 2, at Hi-Fi Music Hall with MarchFourth and High Step Society. For more information on the Lane County effort, check out starlane.us and to volunteer visit facebook.com/starvotinglane.

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