
A BILL FOR AN ACT

PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE HAWAII STATE CONSTITUTION TO REQUIRE
RANKED-CHOICE VOTING IN ELECTIONS AND ELIMINATE PRIMARY
ELECTIONS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's current
2 primary election system fails to engage a majority of registered
3 voters. In 2024, of the 839,618 registered voters in Hawaii,
4 only 271,345 voters participated in the primary election,
5 representing a mere 32.3 per cent turnout rate. By contrast,
6 522,236 voters -- or 60.7 per cent of registered voters --
7 participated in the 2024 general election.

8 Hawaii's open primary system, while intended to be
9 inclusive, creates unusual dynamics where voters registered with
10 one party can select another party's ballot, undermining the
11 traditional party nomination purpose of primary elections.

12 Moreover, the current system allows candidates to win elections
13 with small pluralities when multiple candidates split the vote
14 in crowded races, resulting in elected officials who may not
15 have majority support from voters. Additionally, primary
16 elections cost Hawaii taxpayers over \$5,000,000 to administer,



1 including costs associated with staffing and labor, facilities
2 and equipment, printing and postage, tabulation, and logistics—
3 resources that could be redirected to other critical state
4 needs.

5 The legislature further finds that ranked-choice voting is
6 a proven electoral method that has been successfully used by
7 Ireland, Australia, and Malta for over a hundred years,
8 demonstrating its reliability and effectiveness. In recent
9 years, numerous cities across the United States have adopted
10 ranked-choice voting for their general elections, eliminating
11 the overreliance on primary elections. Under ranked-choice
12 voting, the winner of a single-seat race must receive fifty per
13 cent of the vote plus one, ensuring that elected officials have
14 genuine majority support.

15 Ranked-choice voting neutralizes the "spoiler effect";
16 whereby a third candidate may be perceived as spoiling the
17 chances of a similarly positioned candidate and giving an
18 advantage to the least similar candidate. Under ranked-choice
19 voting, voters can assign preferences to all candidates,
20 ensuring that no vote is wasted and that similar candidates do
21 not take votes away from each other. This system enables



1 multiple candidates from the same underrepresented community to
2 run for the same office without fear of splitting their
3 community's vote, thereby promoting greater diversity in
4 candidate pools.

5 Emerging data demonstrates that jurisdictions using ranked-
6 choice voting experience significant benefits. Over ninety per
7 cent of voters help to elect one of their top three choices,
8 voter turnout increases by five to seven per cent, and voters
9 report less negative campaigning among candidates, as candidates
10 seek to be the second or third choice of their opponents'
11 supporters.

12 The legislature further finds that in 2022, the legislature
13 passed Act 47, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, which established
14 ranked choice voting for special federal elections and special
15 elections of vacant county council seats.

16 Eliminating the primary election and implementing ranked-
17 choice voting in the general election will allow significantly
18 more voters to participate in candidate selection and to
19 consider a broader range of candidates. This reform will result
20 in a more representative, cost-effective, and democratic
21 electoral system that better serves the people of Hawaii.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to propose
2 amendments to articles II and III of the Hawaii State
3 Constitution to require general and special elections to use
4 ranked-choice voting and eliminate primary elections.

5 SECTION 2. Article II, section 4, of the Constitution of
6 the State of Hawaii is amended to read as follows:

7 **"REGISTRATION; VOTING**

8 **Section 4.** The legislature shall provide for the
9 registration of voters and for absentee voting and shall
10 prescribe the method of voting at all elections. Ranked-choice
11 voting shall be used in all elections, as provided by law;
12 provided that if ranked-choice voting is used in a special
13 election, the special election shall consist of only one
14 election contest and no subsequent separate runoff election
15 shall be held. Secrecy of voting shall be preserved; provided
16 that no person shall be required to declare a party preference
17 or nonpartisanship as a condition of voting in any [~~primary or~~
18 ~~special primary~~] election. Secrecy of voting and choice of
19 political party affiliation or nonpartisanship shall be
20 preserved."



SECTION 3. Article II, section 8, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii is amended to read as follows:

"GENERAL^[7] AND SPECIAL [~~AND PRIMARY~~] ELECTIONS

Section 8. General elections shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in all even-numbered years. Special [~~and primary~~] elections may be held as provided by law~~[, provided that in no case shall any primary election precede a general election by less than forty-five days]."~~

SECTION 4. Article III, section 4, of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii is amended to read as follows:

"ELECTION OF MEMBERS; TERM

Section 4. Each member of the legislature shall be elected at an election. If more than one candidate has been nominated for election to a seat in the legislature, the member occupying that seat shall be elected at a general election. [~~If a candidate nominated for a seat at a primary election is unopposed for that seat at the general election, the candidate shall be deemed elected at the primary election.]~~ The term of office of a member of the house of representatives shall be two years and the term of office of a member of the senate shall be four years. The term of a member of the legislature shall begin



1 on the day of the general election at which elected [~~or if~~
2 ~~elected at a primary election, on the day of the general~~
3 ~~election immediately following the primary election at which~~
4 ~~elected~~]. For a member of the house of representatives, the
5 term shall end on the day of the general election immediately
6 following the day the member's term commences. For a member of
7 the senate, the term shall end on the day of the second general
8 election immediately following the day the member's term
9 commences."

10 SECTION 5. Article III, section 6, of the Constitution of
11 the State of Hawaii is amended to read as follows:

12 **"QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS**

13 **Section 6.** No person shall be eligible to serve as a
14 member of the senate unless the person has been a resident of
15 the State for not less than three years, has attained the age of
16 majority and is, prior to filing nomination papers and
17 thereafter continues to be, a qualified voter of the senatorial
18 district from which the person seeks to be elected; except that
19 in the year of the first general election following
20 reapportionment, [~~but prior to the primary election,~~] an
21 incumbent senator may move to a new district without being



1 disqualified from completing the remainder of the incumbent
2 senator's term. No person shall be eligible to serve as a
3 member of the house of representatives unless the person has
4 been a resident of the State for not less than three years, has
5 attained the age of majority and is, prior to filing nomination
6 papers and thereafter continues to be, a qualified voter of the
7 representative district from which the person seeks to be
8 elected; except that in the year of the first general election
9 following reapportionment, ~~[but prior to the primary election,]~~
10 an incumbent representative may move to a new district without
11 being disqualified from completing the remainder of the
12 incumbent representative's term. "

13 SECTION 6. The question to be printed on the ballot shall
14 be as follows:

15 "Shall the Constitution of the State of Hawaii be amended
16 to:

17 (1) Require the use of ranked-choice method in all
18 elections; and

19 (2) Eliminate primary elections?"



1 SECTION 7. Constitutional material to be repealed is
2 bracketed and stricken. New constitutional material is
3 underscored.

4 SECTION 8. This amendment shall take effect upon
5 compliance with article XVII, section 3, of the Constitution of
6 the State of Hawaii.

7

INTRODUCED BY:


JAN 28 2026



H.B. NO. 2528

Report Title:

Constitutional Amendment; Elections; Ranked-Choice Voting;
Primary Elections; Repeal

Description:

Amends the Hawaii State Constitution to require the use of
ranked-choice voting in all elections and eliminate primary
elections.

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not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

