POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Researcher, Democracy + Elections

WWW.SIGHTLINE.ORG
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This is one of many victories for Sightline’s Democracy + Elections program. It comes on top of similar successes for RCV in Seattle and statewide in Alaska. We’ve won on complementary electoral reforms such as democracy vouchers to dilute the influence of big money and election consolidation to double turnout. These advances have built a foundation for bolder steps in the months ahead.

About Sightline Institute

Founded in 1993, Sightline Institute is committed to making Cascadia—the region stretching from Alaska to northern California and from the Pacific to the Rocky Mountain states—a global model of sustainability, with strong communities, a green economy, and a healthy environment.

In our programs on housing and cities, democracy and elections, climate and energy, and farms and forests, we identify and promote reforms that yield outsized improvements for the region’s people and places.

A nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research center, Sightline provides research reports, articles, and commentary; maps, graphics, and tools; framing and messaging guidance; and Sightline Daily news and views for the Northwest. We advise, inform, and advocate to public officials, change makers, and the media, and we collaborate with diverse allies and unconventional coalitions in pursuit of our mission. Sightline is one of Cascadia’s premier public-policy think tanks, and we have an organization-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Learn more at [www.sightline.org](http://www.sightline.org).

Opportunity for Impact: ranked choice voting and other electoral reforms

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The year 2024 presents four giant opportunities for progress on electoral reform in Cascadia:

- In November, Alaskans will vote on a ballot measure that asks whether to keep or repeal the state’s new system of top-four primaries and RCV. Defending the Alaska system is essential. It’s a model for reforms elsewhere!
- Montana appears likely to vote on adopting top-four open primaries and a constitutional requirement for majority winners in elections—a package that would lead to ranked choice voting or other alternatives to the state’s polarizing system of partisan primaries and first-past-the-post general elections.
- Idaho voters will decide a citizens’ initiative to adopt a top-four primary and RCV.
- In November, Oregon will vote on a referendum to adopt RCV in all statewide and federal races. This is the first statewide vote on RCV ever initiated by a legislature.

Sightline’s Democracy + Elections program is seizing these opportunities to conduct research and educate stakeholders and decisionmakers. We have team members in place to support the Alaska, Montana, and Oregon efforts, plus team members who work across all jurisdictions. We are opening a permanent position on this team to support, mostly through research and writing, our efforts in the northern Rockies states of Montana (especially), Idaho, and Wyoming. Although the position will focus on these priorities in the near term, we expect them to lead to other opportunities in future.

About the Researcher position

The Researcher will staff our work, especially in the Rocky Mountain states, as a policy researcher, writer, and communicator. They will develop and deploy expertise on electoral upgrades to make the case for reforms, especially open nonpartisan primaries and ranked choice voting, along with other specific reforms at the state and local level that Sightline has identified as promising. They will implement strategies for using information and communications to help educate and make the case for reforms, typically providing educational resources, data, and case-studies to support cross-partisan coalitions. To that end, the researcher will develop a mastery of Sightline’s democracy reform research and contribute to it, including systems such as open primaries and ranked-choice voting, proportional representation, election consolidation, and democracy vouchers. The researcher will research and develop arguments and resources highlighting the benefits of these reforms for voters and progress on popular issues; write articles, talking points, and policy memos; give presentations; conduct outreach; serve as a resource to the media; and sometimes lobby public officials. They will cultivate relationships with leaders and partners across many types of diversity, including racial, ethnic, economic, geographic, and political.

The researcher will report to a senior member of the Democracy + Elections team and collaborate with the rest of the other researchers in Alaska, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. They will benefit from being part of a high-functioning cadre of researchers, communicators, and advocates, supported by a well-run administrative and fundraising operation based in Seattle.
The Ideal Candidate

Sightline is a think tank, not a pressure group, so our influence depends on the depth and breadth of our researchers' expertise and their persuasiveness in presenting analysis and arguments. We aim to draw attention to and build support for data-backed solutions to specific public problems through close engagement in policy debates. And we seek strategic deployment of our skills in the multilayered complexities of political processes, typically as part of unusual coalitions. The successful candidate will have a record of effecting influence in at least some of these ways. We are specifically interested in candidates who have:

- **A record of influencing policy progress through careful research and analysis, excellent writing, persuasive presentations and advocacy, and strategic engagement in complicated coalitions and through generating media attention**

- **At least five years of relevant professional experience using ideas and information to advance the public good---preferably in the field of this position but at least in similar or related ones. We care more about your skills than your subject-matter expertise**

- **Demonstrated experience building respectful and effective relationships and collaborating with people across difference, including racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural difference along with differences in values and political beliefs**

- **A pragmatic and long-term approach to policy reforms and political change**

- **The ability to be self-directed and motivated and to work independently**

- **Experience weighing diversity, equity, and inclusion in research, advocacy, and communication**

- **Commitment to Sightline's mission and values**

Positional Flexibility

We most likely will hire a candidate who is at the “researcher” level of skill and experience, as described. However, depending on candidates' experience and skill level, we will consider hiring for this position at Sightline's (lower) senior associate level or (higher) senior researcher level. Duties, expectations, and compensation would ramp up or down, commensurately. At Sightline, we believe in mentoring talent and providing opportunities for growth. We look for the overall promise of the candidate to contribute to our mission over the long term. Therefore, if you are somewhat underqualified or overqualified for the position as described or have relevant experience and transferrable skills different from those listed here, but still feel you could be a good fit, please apply. If you seem a promising match for Sightline, we will discuss with you which level we are considering you for.

Location

Sightline is a virtual-first organization. All staff members work remotely. Our staff, contractors, and fellows are across Cascadia, in Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The largest concentration of team members is in Seattle. This position is based anywhere in the Cascadia region. For this position, we have a mild preference for a resident of Idaho, Montana, or Wyoming. Candidates willing to relocate from elsewhere are welcome to apply.
Please send us a resume and cover letter detailing your interest in the role and how your skills qualify you for it. Also, please succinctly summarize your experience advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Please include at least one writing sample of which you are sole author and that is similar to Sightline’s published works in its style and form of argument. For models of comparable work, you might review articles published by Sightline’s Democracy and Elections team here. Also welcome are other supporting materials, such as other publications and videos of speeches or media appearances. We prefer that you assemble all application materials in a single PDF, labeled with your name. Send everything to jobs@sightline.org. Please put “Sightline Researcher, Democracy” as the subject line of the email. Please also tell us in your email where you learned about this position; this information helps us streamline our recruiting processes. Applications that do not include at least a cover letter, resume, and writing sample will not be considered.

THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS JUNE 14, 2024, and applications received by that date will be given priority, but we will accept applications until the position is filled. Interviews will take place in late June. We will likely invite finalists to complete a work assignment designed to test their skills in the specific functions required for the position. We hope to extend an offer by mid-July.

Sightline Institute is an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. Applicants will not be discriminated against because of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, disability, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, medical condition, or any protected category prohibited by local, state or federal laws.