

HB 4124

Taskforce on Campaign Contribution Limits

Problem:

Oregon is one of five states with *no limits on campaign contributions* and money has been flooding Oregon politics for years. The Oregon Legislature has contemplated making changes to the current system for decades but has continued to fall short.

Lay of the Land:

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed SJR 18, which if passed by voters in 2020, will amend the Oregon Constitution to allow for the campaign finance limits. Additionally, a pending Oregon Supreme Court decision may overturn the prohibition on campaign finance limitations. This decision is expected sometime during the 2020 election cycle. Should this decision overturn a previous Supreme Court decision, Measure 47 and its voter-passed contribution limits could be enacted during the middle of the 2020 election cycle, causing uncertainty and additional legal battles. Measure 47 also includes various components already deemed unconstitutional, making implementation of this measure during an election cycle difficult.

What HB 4124 Does:

HB 4124 (2020) will continue the work done by over 40 stakeholders in 2019 to bring fair and sensible campaign finance limits to Oregon's elections. The measure will:

1. HB 4124 establishes a bipartisan, bicameral taskforce to study and make recommendations on campaign contribution limits to prepare for action during the 2021 Legislative Session;
2. The measure also delays the implementation date of Ballot Measure 47 (2006), if the Oregon Supreme Court issues a decision that renders Measure 47 operative, to July 1, 2021.

Reasons to Push Measure 47 Operative Date to July, 2021:

1. ***To create a level playing field*** – Third party candidates and other candidates who enter a race later in the cycle will be competing with candidates who have been campaigning for months with no limits. This creates serious inequities among candidates.
2. ***Avoiding Uncertainty and Needless Litigation*** – According to a Legislative Counsel opinion, pieces of Measure 47 are unconstitutional, while others are debatably unconstitutional. This dynamic will create an environment of uncertainty, thus questioning the enforceability of Measure 47 during the middle of the 2020 General Election. It is important to delay the implementation to ensure we have a *complete*, transparent and accountable campaign finance system.
3. ***Implementing two systems within an 8-month period*** – The legislature is poised to pass a comprehensive campaign finance reform package during the 2021 session. It will be a misuse of Secretary of State staff time and resources, during an important election, to begin the implementation process of a system that is likely to change.