

To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon
Re: SB 336, Contribution Limits
Date: March 9, 2021

Thank you for taking this testimony from Common Cause.

Common Cause

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest, accountable government. We are over one million Americans – including roughly 30,000 Oregonians – working together to realize the unfinished promise of democracy.

Common Cause urges your leadership for campaign finance reform.

To that end, please consider this:

- **Our campaign finance system is broken.**
And it's not just a federal problem. Oregon is among the states with the most expensive political campaigns per capita, ranking worst for corporate cash to lawmakers.
- **It doesn't have to be this way.**
Common sense reforms make a difference. It takes a combination of reasonable limits, transparency, and a public small-dollar match.
- **Oregonians across party lines strongly support reform.**
Voters just passed M107 with a 78% yes vote, including at least 2/3rds support in every county. Rarely if ever have Oregon voters given such a high endorsement of a ballot measure, let alone one that's a constitutional amendment.
- **These principles can help guide good reform.**
 - ⇒ No unlimited contributions.
 - ⇒ Set limits at dollar amounts that average Oregonians could consider giving.
 - ⇒ Do not allow a few donors or political committees to dominate via pass-through loopholes.
 - ⇒ Ensure that independent expenditures are in fact independent by enforcing anti-coordination rules; and make them fully transparent to voters through strong tagline provisions.
 - ⇒ Allow people to aggregate their contributions for collective impact but ensure all money is tracked, transparent, and limited.
 - ⇒ Use a small-dollar match to amplify small contributors and to give candidates the ability to raise enough money entirely from small contributions.

We appreciate and applaud Sen. Golden's leadership.

Common Cause has not yet taken a formal position on any of the bills on campaign contribution limits, and we understand that these are all starting proposals that are likely to be amended. However, I offer these initial comments on SB 336, which I think is a strong proposal.

- Notably, no one is left unlimited.
- Strengthens disclosure of independent expenditures, including tagline disclosure of top five donors behind an expenditure.
- Includes provision aimed at preventing one person from controlling multiple PACs, though this could be strengthened, to prevent separate but coordinated PACs.
- Helps minimize, though not adequately stop power of a few donors to put thumb on scale.
- Political parties, caucus committees, and small donor committees (each allowed to give 20x individual limits) will become the big bundlers.

We encourage legislators to pass campaign contribution limits this session, as part of comprehensive campaign finance reform, including independent expenditure disclosure and a small donor match.