

Campaign Finance Reform testimony in favor of Salinas Bill and recommendations for improving Rayfield Bill.

Dear Members of the Committee studying legislation for Campaign Finance Reform;

I strongly support campaign finance reform and encourage you to advance the Salinas Bill, HB 3343. I have more confidence in it to make necessary reforms than I do with the Rayfield proposal, HB 2680. HB 3343 provides the most robust set of measures to reduce the influence of big money in Oregon's politics and for this reason I support it. I am inspired to submit written testimony because I have read the pamphlet from the Academy of Arts and Sciences, a prominent institution, which commissioned the Report Our Common Cause; the report issued findings regarding important changes that should be made to our civic, electoral culture. Out of a large number of recommendations, third on their list was Campaign Finance Reform; a recommendation from a Bi-Partisan Commission.

Furthermore, the Oregon people spoke very forcefully in favor of campaign finance reform with the passage of Measure 107 by 73% of the voters. To give short shrift to this mandate would be a terrible shame. Please use your opportunity to advance the more progressive legislative proposals.

Finally, our country's democracy has lost its civic essence as a result of big money in politics; most notably, in the case of Citizens United, in which the U.S. Supreme Court found that money is corporate speech and it may not be abridged. Though Citizens' United is a Federal matter, Oregon should speak strongly to the need for reform, and by advancing HB 3343, Oregon can send a message that its politicians will be playing by a different set of campaign finance rules; rules that build our democracy, not undermine it.

You are also considering HB 2680, sponsored by Rep. Rayfield; I am advised by experts that this bill provides too many loopholes for 'big money' to make its way into our state electoral system.

The bill fails to limit in the following ways:

Contribution limits should not be compromised by allowing contributions by for-profit corporations.

Local governments should not be allowed to nullify limits for local candidates. This loophole also would create a backdoor to funnel big money to other races

It gives the Democratic and Republican caucuses in the Legislature special rights to receive and make huge contributions.

It changes the definition of a contribution in order to allow unlimited contributions to political parties.

Self-funded candidates are not required, but should be required, to disclose in their ads how much they are spending on their campaigns.

It provides no enforcement mechanism; we need enforcement that is independent of partisan government officials.

Thank you for your consideration; if you feel you must proceed with the Rayfield Bill, then please improve it so the above concerns are addressed. Preferably, your committee will see the wisdom in the more democratic Salinas Bill, HB 3343, and advance it and shelve the less progressive Rayfield Bill.

Thank You,
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