

March 30, 2021

TO: House Committee on Rules  
FR: Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)  
RE: HB 3343 & HB 2680

OSPIRG is a statewide, grassroots, public interest group that represents thousands of Oregonians.

**We support HB 3343. We are also a member of the stakeholder group convened by Rep. Rayfield as he develops HB 2680. Hopefully, that bill gets to a place where we are able to be supportive, but as it currently stands (including the -1 and -2 amendments), we are unable to support it at this time.**

We recently looked at campaign contribution data from Oregon's 2016 statewide and legislative races and what we found was a stark disparity between large and small donors. For the purposes of the study we defined a small donor as someone who gave \$250 or less and we defined a large donor as someone who gave \$5,000 or more. In statewide and legislative races, 424 large donors gave a total of nearly \$9 million dollars, or on average, \$21,142 per donor. In contrast, approximately 30,000 small donors gave \$2.4 million. So just a small set of wealthy donors out gave all small donors to candidates by almost 4 to 1.

Because of this disparity, it's no surprise that the vast majority of Oregonians and Americans think that big money is a problem in our politics and it's one that urgently needs to be addressed. A recent national study found that 88% of Americans supported reducing the influence of big campaign donors in elections.<sup>1</sup> Closer to home, Measure 107, amending Oregon's constitution to allow contribution limits, passed with 78% of the vote, and with at least 60% of the vote in every single county in Oregon. And a statewide poll from 2015 found that 75% of Oregonians believe that those without access to networks of wealthy donors face significant barriers to running for office.<sup>2</sup>

**OSPIRG's principles for evaluating campaign finance reform:**

- Contribution limits should be set to an amount the average Oregonian might be able to afford and would see as meaningfully taking power away from big donors and special interests.
- Loopholes that allow big donors and special interests to continue contributing large amounts simply by moving money through new political committees must be avoided.
- Strong disclosure requirements for political communications made through independent expenditures are critical.
- Public financing through a small dollar-matching system will make the entire system work better and allow candidates without wealth or connections to large donors to better participate in our democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Americans Evaluate Campaign Finance Reform, Voice for the People & University of Maryland, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Big Money in Oregon State Elections, OSPIRG Foundation, 2018.