

February 9, 2022

Senate Committee on Rules  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE, Room 334  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Committee Members:

Legislators face a dilemma with campaign finance reform. Pass strict legislation and it could jeopardize re-election chances by helping challengers. Fail to pass anything and a strict initiative petition may qualify for the ballot and pass.

Petitioners have filed six prospective campaign finance initiatives. Initiative petitions 43, 44, and 45 will receive certified ballot titles by the end of this week.

Public support for campaign contribution limits is strong in Oregon. Ballot measure 107, allowing contribution limits, passed with a 78% yes vote in 2020.

Both SB1526 and SB1561 are long complex bills with uncertain consequences. Neither is likely to pass during a short session.

Both bills go beyond Measure 107 by including a Small Donor Elections Program. Survey research has found that support for public funding of campaigns is weaker than that for contribution limits. (Gallup. 2013. *Half in U.S. Support Publicly Financed Federal Campaigns.*) Contribution limits and public funding should be separate bills.

The best strategy in such a situation would be incremental so that legislators could reasonably assess the consequences of reform at each step.

To address the worst problem—the undue influence of big donors, you could gut one of these bills and stuff it with something like:

**A candidate or the principal campaign committee of a candidate for any elected office may not accept aggregate contributions in excess of \$\_\_\_ per election from an individual, a multicandidate political committee or the principal campaign committee of a candidate.**

The blank could be filled with an amount of a few thousand dollars. It could also be indexed for a similar amount based on a multiplier of the median hourly wage or the minimum wage to align the interests of elected officials with ordinary Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Brian Wanty  
Eugene, Oregon