

## House Bill 4024 Testimony

In 2020, Douglas County, along with the state overall, overwhelmingly approved Measure 107. The measure amended the Oregon Constitution by enabling the state and local governments to limit campaign contributions. Despite voters approving the amendment, unlimited campaign contributions persisted during the 2022 primary and general elections. In the Gubernatorial race, contributions totaled over \$70 million<sup>1</sup>, surpassing and almost doubling the \$37 million contributed during the 2018 race.<sup>2</sup> In a system overburdened with unlimited spending, large donors have the power to leverage their authority over the electoral process. Capping contributions would allow a more equitable environment.

During the 2022 California gubernatorial election, Gavin Newsom, running for re-election, only received \$25 million. Despite California having a population ten times larger than ours, their governor received less money than Governor Tina Kotek and only around three million more than former Representative Christine Drahan. Although small donors do contribute, wealthy donors wield considerable power. Nike CEO Phil Knight, for example, contributed \$3.75 million to Betsy Johnson and \$1.5 million to Christine Drahan.<sup>3</sup> This limits ordinary voices and acts as a barrier to people with limited resources who want to participate. The amendment proposed to HB 4024 relies on exceptions too broad to reduce the power large contributions have on our elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Hillary Borrud, "Political Donors Spent More Than \$70 Million on Oregon Governor's Race," The Oregonian, last modified November 23, 2022, <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2022/11/political-donors-spent-more-than-70-million-on-oregon-governors-race.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Hillary Borrud, "Spending on Oregon Governor's Race Shatters Old Record," The Oregonian, last modified November 21, 2018, <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2018/11/political-spending-in-oregon-governors-race-tops-37-million-shatters-old-record.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Nigel Jaquiss, "Phil Knight Reflects on Political Contributions in CNBC Interview As Kotek Declares Victory," Willamette Weekly, last modified November 10, 2022, <https://www.wweek.com/news/2022/11/10/phil-knight-reflects-on-political-contributions-in-cnbc-interview-as-kotek-declares-victory/>.

By allowing multiple organizations, such as “membership organizations,” and “small-donor committees,” to accept contributions, the bill retains exceptions that could enable large donors to continue to exert considerable power over state and local elections. I adamantly support contribution limits, but any limits must be narrow enough to ensure that no one’s voice takes precedence over the other.

Bibliography:

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