

Submitter: Peter Bergel  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure: HB4024

Members of the Committee,

My name is Peter Bergel. I live in Salem, OR and have lived in Oregon most of my life.

When I worked as a Legislative Assistant in the early 1980s, I was proud that the Oregon Legislature was a “clean” body, compared to many others. Campaign spending was a bit of a problem, but nothing like what we are seeing today. Oregon is now one of the few states that has NO restrictions on campaign spending. That means that well-heeled individuals and corporate interests can shamelessly bribe legislators to obtain the results they want.

Some legislators claim that money does not influence their votes on the issues, but no one out here in the public believes that. We see that legislators have to focus more and more of their time fundraising so they can spend more and more money on getting re-elected. Many quality candidates do not want to run for office for this very reason.

I understand that the -5 amendment to HB 4024 further weakens the restrictions in this bill and does not provide for honest disclosure of the true funders of political ads. Likewise, campaign finance limits – the very thing that Oregonians voted for – are lost in the -5 amendment’s loopholes. The result would be that big money will continue to unduly influence our elections.

Frustrated that the Legislature has so far not provided the campaign finance reform Oregon voters demanded, hard-working citizen activists have drafted Petition 9 to put the issue on the ballot. Having failed to provide what Oregonians clearly wanted, the Legislature should now let the voters speak again rather than undermining Petition 9 by passing a bill that definitely does not pass the democratic smell test.

The limits in Petition 9 are reasonable and would provide adequate support for reasonable campaign needs. Moreover, Petition 9’s provisions would restore a healthy measure of democracy to our elections.

I therefore urge you to oppose bill HB4024. If you wish to take action this session, you can refer Petition 9 to the ballot or continue to do nothing. Please respect grassroots efforts to bring this issue before the public in a manner that the public is likely to support.

Thank you for your consideration, please vote NO on HB-4024.