

I am not a campaign finance reform activist. I am a retired scientist, and over the last few years I have had the opportunity to exercise the privilege of participating in the workings of state government in my native state of Oregon. I discovered OLIS early on and found that I enjoyed following bills that piqued my interest. I listened to hearings (and heard multiple sides of what I had thought were straightforward proposals) and read loads of testimonies that represented an array of perspectives from concerned Oregonians.

Last year, my attention was drawn to HB3392, primarily because it was not posted until the last 2 weeks of an extremely busy long session. I listened to the hearings, read the testimonies and did research on claims made by opposing sides. I was dismayed to hear the SOS whine about how hard the job of implementing the bill turned out to be, how new tools were needed, how a good product could not be delivered in time, and how an additional \$25 million was needed to complete the project. And I read the testimonies of professional campaign finance reform individuals and organizations who detailed at length how the problems could be addressed in the time allotted, and who offered their services to work with the SOS's office to remedy the issue (as they had been offering since the passage of HB4024). To my relief, the bill did not get out of committee.

So I was surprised to see HB4018 appear on the roster for this 2026 short session. I suppose I should not have been surprised when an 84-page "amendment" was filed to this one-page study bill at 9pm the night before the scheduled hearing the next day at 8am. None of the campaign finance reform entities had been involved in or informed of this amendment. I imagine that House Interim Committee on Rules members were similarly dismayed that they would be expected to read the amendment instead of sleep that night. To add insult to injury, the amendment essentially disembowels the original intent of HB4024 and extends timelines well past 2028.

This entire saga smells. No, it reeks. Campaign finance reform is a complicated issue and requires collaborative exchange and negotiation. Even if the job given to the SOS in 2024 was too big and too hard be accomplished in 4 years, when it is shrouded in devious tactics and blatant exclusion of primary stakeholders, even the appearance of good governance is sabotaged. Furthermore, it makes one question the integrity of the Office of one of the highest elected officials in the state.

Here is the conundrum: If HB 4018 -6 passes, it will irremediably impede real campaign finance reform in Oregon for years to come. If it does not pass, we should expect the SOS to return (likely at the 11th hour) to the 2027 legislative session with a new series of unresolved technical problems, new reasons why existing technologies are inferior and renewed requests for additional funding. Given those two choices, **I must still vote to oppose HB 4018 -6**, particularly but not solely because in the current budget crisis that Oregon faces

for the next several years, we do not have \$25 million this year to sink into disingenuous lists of problems and indefatigable requests for more funding.

I respectfully suggest an alternate solution for consideration, if this is within the purview of the Legislature. Give the SOS and the CFR community 6 months to set up and implement a process to work alongside one another in good faith, draw on shared expertise, and resolve the list of problems and “fixes” that each entity brings to the table. If this proceeds in good faith, then perhaps we won’t have to waste any more precious legislative effort in 2027 on a problem that could and should have been resolved with adult conversations.

Respectfully Submitted,

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