



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON

April 21, 2015

To: Senate Committee on Rules
Senator Diane Rosenbaum, Chair
zoe.larmer@state.or.us

RE: SJR 5 Campaign Contribution Limits Amendment - SUPPORT

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a non-partisan, political organization that educates voters and encourages informed citizen participation in government. The League supports SJR 5. From past attempts to limit excessive monetary contributions to candidate campaigns, we have learned that an amendment to the Oregon constitution is required for such limits. For many decades, Oregonians accepted the mandatory curtailing of contributions in state elections. The laws were in effect, beginning in the early 1900s, to the 1970s. The Legislature decided to curb campaign spending in 1973, and in passing that legislation, they also removed the contribution limits law as being unnecessary. In the lawsuit filed in protest regarding spending limits, the Oregon Supreme Court decided in favor of the plaintiff, and left Oregon with no campaign finance curbs. In the 20 years from 1975 to 1994, the cost of legislative elections rose from \$3000 for the House and \$5000 for the Senate, to \$30,000 for the House and \$50,000 for the Senate.

In 1974, by 72% across the state, voters approved limits on both contributions and expenditures through an initiative. Those limits were in effect through the 1994 campaign, with a sizeable decrease in campaign costs, but a much larger rise in independent expenditures on behalf of candidates. The lawsuit against those limits was successful in 1997, leaving Oregon one of a handful of states with no brakes on excessive campaign costs. What Oregon has are strong disclosure statutes, but they are not enough for the current torrent of dollars being spent to influence Oregon elections. Giving the Legislature and the people through the direct democracy system the ability to control campaign contributions is not only necessary, but good for democracy and voters. Please move the constitutional amendment SJR 5 forward. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Wisdom". The script is fluid and cursive.

Robin Wisdom
President, LWVOR

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kappy Eaton". The script is fluid and cursive.

Kappy Eaton
Governance Coordinator