



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director
In Opposition to SJR 5
Senate Committee on Rules
April 21, 2015**

Chair Rosenbaum and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SJR 5. We oppose this proposal because it would fundamentally weaken the Oregon Bill of Rights.

While we appreciate the proponents' intentions, we believe the appropriate response to imbalances in political speech is to expand, not limit, the resources available for political advocacy. We support campaign finance reform through a system of fair and adequate public financing. It helps even the playing field while at the same time it does not tamper with the fundamental protections provided by the founders of the Oregon constitution. We also strongly support disclosure requirements.

SJR 5 would have the effect of creating an exemption from Article I, section 8 for any prohibitions or limitations on political contributions to candidates. Such an exemption from Article I, section 8 is problematic for several reasons:

- Imposing contribution limits in Oregon campaigns will only make our system more like the broken federal system. If candidates can't raise enough money directly for their campaigns, then spending by independent expenditure committees will greatly expand. This will occur because independent expenditures cannot be restricted under several federal court decisions.
- Increased spending by independent expenditure committees will mean that candidates will have less and less control over campaigns—and will be less accountable for what gets said on their behalf during campaigns.
- Another impact of contribution limits—which we have seen occur for many years in federal races—is that candidates will have to fundraise constantly. This will happen because candidates will have to increase the number of contributions from special interests (both individuals and PACS) in order to raise enough money to communicate with voters. This will have the practical effect of making candidates *more* beholden to special interests.
- Contribution limits will also have the effect of increasing the number of millionaires who run for public office in Oregon, because the U.S. Supreme Court has held that contribution limits cannot be applied to contributions made by a candidate to his or her own campaign. This is the reason we have many more millionaires in the U.S. Senate today than we did in the 1970s.

Oregonians have a proud history of supporting the Oregon Free Expression Provision set forth in Article I, section 8 of the Oregon Constitution. We urge you to continue this tradition by voting no on SJR 5.