

Senate Rules Committee
April 21, 2015
Testimony of Barbara Dudley in support of SJR 5

Chair Rosenbaum, members of the Committee.

My name is Barbara Dudley. I am a senior fellow at PSU's Center for Public Service and Policy Advisor to the Oregon Working Families Party.

I am here to testify in favor of SJR5.

I don't need to remind you that the former governor and his fiancé are facing accusations and investigations for soliciting and accepting payment for promoting specific policies within administrative agencies and the legislature. In the wake of the Governor Kitzhaber's resignation, there has been a frenzy of activity trying to tighten up our state's ethics laws to restore some public confidence in government.

Ironically our ethics laws are already pretty tight. As a lobbyist, even as a volunteer lobbyist, one has to report any sandwich, cup of coffee or beer one might buy for a legislator, and we are precluded from making a gift over \$50 to public officials in order to influence policy.

And yet any one of those business entities that entered into contracts with Cylvia Hayes to try to push the prosperity initiative could have paid millions of dollars directly into the Governor's campaign coffers without causing even the slightest kerfuffle because our ethics laws are made explicitly inapplicable to campaign contributions.

Phil Knight, for example, gave John Kitzhaber a quarter of a million dollars for his gubernatorial campaign, and other Nike employees added thousands more in donations, and it didn't even raise a legal eyebrow.

Just to remind ourselves, in December 2012 John Kitzhaber did Phil Knight and Nike a huge favor, calling the Legislature into an extraordinary special session, muscling through a bill specifically for Nike, extending their very favorable single sales factor tax rate for the next thirty years – guaranteed! That means a whole lot of money saved for Nike for thirty years.

Just a few months later Phil Knight gives \$250,000 to John Kitzhaber's campaign for a 4th term as Governor. Perhaps they were good friends, you say. Perhaps Phil Knight was a tried and true Kitzhaber supporter all along. Yes, but ... Knight had given Kitzhaber's Republican opponent \$400,000 for the prior 2010 gubernatorial race.

You can forgive the average Oregonian their cynicism. Especially younger Oregonians are so turned off by our lack of campaign finance controls that they don't even bother to register, much less vote.

You recently passed and our new Governor has signed into law a landmark bill for nearly universal voter registration, gaining Oregon much deserved national attention for its commitment to democracy. But registration will do little to overcome voter cynicism without meaningful campaign finance rules.

Granted we have no control over what the US Supreme Court has done to inject monstrous amounts of unaccountable cash into our elections, but we at least have to take responsibility for the aspect of campaign finance that we can influence. SJR5 does just that. I urge you to send it to the voters. Thank you