

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Joseph Wolf. (I live at 4639 SW 18th Place in Portland.) I have been the rabbi at Havurah Shalom in Portland for the past 28 years. I work with people active in the political process, a number of whom frequent this building; and being Portland's longest serving rabbi – it's safe to say that I hear about the full array of issues that concern everyone here. My people care about education, student loan debt, homelessness, community safety and gun violence. They worry about climate change and its impacts on our beautiful state, and they worry about joblessness and the burdens placed on the shoulders of families who are unspoken for in our ongoing economic recovery.

But if there's something else that disturbs me even more when I am speaking with them, it's their disenchantment with the political process that comes up. They wonder whether it will be possible to govern responsibly, at all. I have to tell you that I am a believer in the privilege to serve one's community, and I hold in respect those who represent the will of the people – there is nothing more foundational about our democracy. And yet we all know there is a bug in the system, and that's the power of big money to determine who gets elected and towards which goals. And this cynicism about who represents us is an invasive species that hurts us all; and it should be our priority issue above all others.

So this is why I am asking you, every one of you, to support SJR5. We know that Oregonians have already checked in on campaign contribution limits – it's a matter, according to the courts, of our legislature mustering the moral courage to vote in favor of referring a constitutional amendment to the voters. No one knows better than you what it costs to make an election happen and how much time you waste convincing people to ante up to reach a dubious plateau – Oregon being behind forty-four other states that have made it a point to take action on campaign finance reform. This is a travesty, I think you'd agree, and one that has tied everyone's hands.

The Greeks taught us that justice is blind. No preferential treatment, when it comes to political influence. The Torah puts it differently: the eyes of justice are wide open and discerning. It's "bribery that blinds the eyes of people who are wise". Please vote for campaign contribution limits. Vote for SJR5. Thank you!