

June 1, 2015

TO: House Committee on Rules  
FR: David Rosenfeld, Executive Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)  
RE: Opposition to -1 amendment to HB 2178

OSPIRG opposes the -1 amendment to House Bill 2178.

Our understanding of the bill's original intent was to ensure that, in the final period before Election Day when voter interest is at its peak, the electorate knows who a candidate or ballot measure campaign's largest donors are in as "real time" as feasible.

As originally written, this intent was carried out by requiring, within the two weeks before the Election, 48 hour disclosure of contributions that aggregate to \$2500 or more. As a tradeoff, the bill doubled the length of time that smaller contributions must be disclosed (from seven to fourteen days). OSPIRG took no position on the introduced bill because, while we were enthusiastic about the additional 2-day reporting provision, we saw little reason to reduce transparency for smaller contributions.

The -1 amendment changes the trigger for the 2 day reporting requirement from an aggregate contribution of \$2500 to a single \$2500 contribution. This creates a loophole. For example, a candidate or ballot committee could accept multiple \$2499 contributions and not have to report within the two day window. That could happen under the status quo, but because the bill also doubles the 7 day reporting requirement to 14 days for all contributions under \$2500, voters now would have to wait twice as long for that scenario to become public.

We see no rationale for changing the law to allow this scenario to occur, no matter how rare it may be. Even a \$1000 contribution is orders of magnitude greater than what most voters can afford to give, and thus deserves at least the scrutiny that a seven day reporting window provides, unless there's a tradeoff that overall improves the process. The introduced version marginally strikes that balance; the -1 amendment does not.

We are not sympathetic to arguments that the introduced version is burdensome for campaigns. Having recently run a ballot committee in the most recent general election that catalogued nearly 10,000 contributions, we're familiar with the mechanics of Oregon's campaign finance transparency process, and see no need to go backwards.

We have no problem if the amendment retained the single \$2500 contribution piece, but also reverted back to the current 7 day reporting window for all smaller contributions. That would preserve the best elements of the status quo, while also creating some enhancements as well.