

February 28, 2017

**TO:** House Committee on Rules

**FR:** Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)

**RE:** Support of House Bill 2578

OSPIRG supports HB 2578

OSPIRG is a statewide, citizen-based organization that represents thousands of everyday Oregonians.

Our staff have thousands of conversations with people at their doorsteps every year in Oregon and I can say for certain that one of the top things on people's minds is the influence that big money has in our elections process. People want to participate and make a difference in the democratic process either as a candidate or as a donor, but too often these people decide not to because they think either they can't run a successful campaign against well-funded candidates or don't think their contribution will make a difference.

Creating a Small Donor Elections program will take straightforward steps to raise the voices of everyday people, reduce the influence of big money, and ensure that everyone's voice is heard in our government. We think that this reform can have a positive effect on how representative people running for office and people who ultimately win office are of the state at large. And perhaps just as important, it will help increase people's belief that our democracy works for them.

Finally, as an organization that gets much of its funding from small contributions from everyday Oregonians, we can say for certain that getting small dollar contributions from thousands of members of the public leads to greater accountability to and awareness of the issues people care about.

Oregon has been a national leader in creating a strong democracy. Our early adoption of voting entirely by mail and of motor voter registration shows our commitment to high voter participation in elections. We have the opportunity to lead once again on how elections are paid for and who is able to successfully run for office.

For these and many other reasons, on behalf of everyday Oregonians across the state we urge you to support House Bill 2578.