



My name is Daniel Lewkow and I am Political Director for Common Cause Oregon. Common Cause Oregon is a non-partisan organization that advocates for openness in our democracy, fairness in our elections, and accountability in our government. Common Cause Oregon urges you to pass House Bill 2702.

House Bill 2702 requires that campaign ads identify whether they have been authorized by a candidate. If a candidate sends out an ad, then the candidate must state that he or she has approved and authorized the ad. And if an organization sends out an ad that has not been authorized by a candidate, they must state that fact on the ad. This is more commonly called a Disclaimer Law, and forty-six other states--and the federal government--have adopted them as a common-sense solution to secretive, unaccountable campaign ads.

There are several important benefits to passing HB 2702.

The first is to reduce the distribution of false and misleading ads. This is a growing issue here in Oregon. For instance, in the 2016 primary election, someone sent out a fake voters pamphlet to voters in House District 44, with a message that appeared to be authorized by Tina Kotek, who was running for her party's nomination. The ad provided misleading information about her, while implying that she had authorized the message. Voters were misled about whether the ad came from Speaker Kotek, her opponent, or a third party organization. You can see the fake ad in the Materials Section of OLIS. While this example affected a specific district, the problem could affect voters and candidates from any party in any district.

False ads like this ad are concerning. It challenges the integrity of our elections if third-party organizations can impersonate candidates, or if one candidate can impersonate another candidate. These false and misleading ads make it difficult for voters to evaluate the information that they receive during an election.

HB 2702 addresses this problem in a simple and direct manner. If we require ads to state whether they were or were not authorized by a candidate, then we can give voters information about who is responsible for the message.

Second, candidates should stand by their messages. Candidates have a right to say what they choose. But voters also have a right to hold candidates accountable for false or misleading statements. Voters in Oregon deserve to have the same tools to evaluate campaign messages that voters in forty-six other states have.

Finally, the reform ensures that everyone follows the same rules. Oregon's candidates for Congress have to follow federal disclaimer laws, and many of the candidates for state office choose to include disclaimers on their ads. But some candidates and groups refuse to be accountable for their ads. HB 2702 eliminates a loophole in our laws, and makes sure that everyone follows the same rules.

HB 2702 is a straightforward reform that makes sense for Oregon. It reduces false and misleading ads. It gives Oregon voters the same tools that voters in forty-six other states have to hold candidates accountable. And it ensures that every candidate plays by the same rules.

A healthy democracy needs transparency and accountability. HB 2702 is a proven, simple, bipartisan reform that we can adopt here in Oregon. Common Cause Oregon urges you to pass this bill.