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To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon
Re: Support for SB 888

Common Cause supports SB 888 requiring candidates for President and Vice President of the United States to release tax returns before qualifying for the ballot in Oregon.

Over the past 40 years, the public has come to rely on presidential candidates voluntarily releasing their tax returns. This practice not only helps to increase transparency and reduce conflicts of interest, it also increases the public's trust and confidence in our nation's leaders. However, the most recent election has shown that a voluntary system is not enough.

Tax returns of presidential candidates are particularly important because the president is not subject to the same conflict of interest laws as other members of the executive branch. Moreover, tax returns can provide significantly more information than the minimally-required candidate financial disclosure, as explained by Richard Painter and Norman Eisen, who served as ethics attorney for Presidents Bush and Obama, respectively, and who have jointly called on the current president to release his tax returns (see NYT 10/6/16, and Politico 10/31/16 for more on this).

As you consider this bill, I would suggest that you consider requiring release of more than a single year's tax returns, to provide a fuller picture.

Thank you for considering this testimony.