



Oregon Secretary of State's Office Testimony on HJR 13

The Secretary of State's Office encourages the committee to consider campaign finance reform options that are consistent with several key fairness principles.

First, we need to listen to the voters. In 2006, 53% of voters statewide supported specific campaign finance limits but 59% rejected a broad constitutional amendment allowing a wide variety of potential campaign finance regulations. More recently, 87% of voters in Portland supported local campaign finance limits in 2018, and 88% of voters in Multnomah County supported local campaign finance limits in 2016. There is much that can be learned from these citizen-initiated proposals and also some elements that could be improved. As currently drafted, HJR 13 effectively overturns these prior voter-approved measures and unfortunately does not even attempt to preserve their good aspects.

Second, any campaign finance reforms should be designed to encourage transparency and simplicity so that voters can hold elected officials accountable.

Third, the split statewide vote in 2006 suggests that any limits for state offices should be specified in the Constitution and indexed for inflation so that only the people can make changes. This will ensure that special interest groups can't force through unfair rules in the future that bias the playing field. As currently drafted, HJR 13 needs significant changes in this area.

Fourth, any campaign contribution limits should treat all speech equally. The goal of campaign finance reform is to reduce the influence of money on elections, not to add loopholes or create institutional advantages for favored special interest groups.

Fifth, limits should be low enough to prevent billionaires and special interest groups from buying elections, but high enough to protect the right of Oregonians to actively participate in the election process. Candidates need to be able to raise enough money to control their own campaigns and to avoid independent expenditures dominating the process.

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