



Sharon Meieran

Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1

To: House Committee on Rules and Senate Committee on Campaign Finance
From: Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County Commissioner
Date: March 13, 2019
Re: Support for HJR 13

Chairs Holvey and Golden; Vice Chairs Wilson, Williamson, and Knopp; and Members of the Committees,

My name is Sharon Meieran, and I represent District 1 on the Board of County Commissioners for Multnomah County. I strongly support efforts to enact campaign contribution limits and other common-sense campaign finance reforms in Oregon.

Oregon is one of only five states with no limits on political contributions, and as a candidate I experienced the impact of this firsthand. The reality is that raising money to run for office is a necessity everywhere in our country. But the process is less equitable in Oregon than in other parts of the country due to lack of contribution limits.

As a candidate, I felt pressure to raise as much money as possible so that I would be able to get my message out to as many voters as possible. Unfortunately, instead of reaching out to every forum or venue to talk about my policy ideas or the issues I cared about, I spent much of my time talking to select sets of potential donors. These individual donors were good people and organizations. I believed that they would support my message and what I wanted to work on as a County Commissioner. But the pressure to raise as much money as possible meant that I often would have to triage my outreach efforts and sometimes defer my outreach to people who couldn't contribute as much (or even at all).

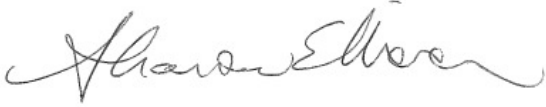
In addition, I believe the fundraising process causes significant inequities in who runs for office and who is ultimately elected, often favoring candidates who are able to raise the most money. This can make running for office particularly challenging for people who traditionally have been excluded from our systems and don't have the access to networks of individuals who may be able to make significant contributions.

The free speech clause in the Oregon Constitution is the same as that in the constitutions of 36 other states. But only in Oregon are we prohibited from establishing campaign contribution limits as a result of this provision.

In 2016, nearly 90% of voters in Multnomah County supported a ballot measure limiting campaign contributions. It is clear that voters overwhelmingly support reasonable limits on campaign contributions. I encourage you to act in this session to refer a measure to the ballot in 2020 clarifying that campaign finance limits are allowed under the Oregon Constitution. Voters

should be able to weigh in and allow the Legislature to enact statewide limits and establish a level playing field.

Thank you for your work on this important issue and for the opportunity to submit testimony.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sharon Meieran".

Sharon Meieran, MD, JD

Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1