

To: House Rules Committees
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon
Re: Campaign Finance Reform Package
HB 2714 –4 contribution limits
Date: May 28, 2019

Common Cause

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest, accountable government. We're more than one million Americans – including 25,000 Oregonians – working together to realize the unfinished promise of democracy.

Support for Campaign Finance Reform

Common Cause supports passage of a package of campaign finance reforms to limit, disclose, and reduce the influence of money in the political process. We support HB 2714 –4, the proposed system of contribution limits before you today, as part of that package, along with measures to improve transparency, and most fundamentally, a referral to the ballot to amend the constitution, clarifying authority to regulate money in politics.

The problem of money in politics is complex. It will take a comprehensive approach. Oregon needs an upper ceiling on campaign contributions like nearly every other state. At the same time, we need to raise the floor with a small donor matching program that makes small contributions meaningful and gives candidates supported by small contributions enough money to get their message out, even when there are independent expenditures. And though we can't currently limit independent spending, we can require full transparency. All these components are needed.

We encourage efforts to further strengthen this package. Most significantly, we urge adding a small donor matching fund component, like the one outlined in HB 3004. As this package stands now, without a small donor election bill, it should help significantly slow the escalating arms race of campaign spending and prevent exceptionally large contributions. However, to fundamentally change the way campaigns are financed, so that the small contributions of ordinary constituents matter as much as that of any political donor, and so that candidates can raise enough money from these small contributions – ultimately, we'll need to add in a small donor election piece.

However, as is, we believe HB2714 –4 and this package is an important step in the right direction.