

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

**SOCAN**

Confronting Climate Change

<https://socan.eco>

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Chair Wagner and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules

I write as co-facilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now on behalf of the over 1600 rural Southern Oregonians who are SOCAN. Our mission is to promote awareness and understanding of the science of global warming and its climate change consequences and motivate individual and collective action to address the resulting climate crisis.

While campaign finance reform may seem far out of the sphere of interest of a climate activist organization, it is not! Indeed, for many activists in the climate arena, campaign financing is almost the underlying cause for the abject failure of legislatures across the nation, and the world, to act appropriately on the climate crisis. Although this crisis is evident to anyone who is conscious and has their eyes open, time and again legislative action is thwarted by those who have been elected as a result of campaign contributions from the very industries exhibiting business models that are causing the problem. We are well aware that the corridors of legislatures teem with lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry. Meanwhile, candidates for office with a hint of sympathy for fossil fuel corporation are rewarded with huge campaign contribution support virtually ensuring their election. The problem is multiplied many-fold when a state has no limits on campaign contributions. In such a situation, the fossil fuel sources of funding can provide almost unlimited funding to encourage legislator resistance to climate action that encourages a shift away from their product.

Many of us in the climate activist arena place campaign finance reform almost as a parallel priority. Unless we manage to reduce the impact of the egregious financial impact on our electoral process and democracy overall, we will find addressing serious environmental and social issues such as the climate crisis, difficult to impossible. The problem, of course, is that those profiting from the abuse of our water and air are the very entities contributing financially to prevent legislation from passing that would reduce their capacity to externalize costs and require internalizing their behavior and costs.

A civilized society functions because, through our elected officials, we mutually agree on a set of rules that harness the irresponsible behavior that some members of society would display absent those rules. The problem with unlimited campaign financing is that the very individuals and entities that seek to undermine our democracy and our civilized society in order to reap profits will support candidates who support their views.

Because our civilized society is under so much threat from those willing to throw money at the campaigns of candidates who will represent their anti-social attitudes and thwart sane legislative

proposals, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now supports the efforts embodied in SB1526 and SB1561 to regulate campaign financing in Oregon. Since the state is one of very few states that still allows unlimited financing of campaigns, passage of a measure to restrict this opportunity would enhance the reputation of the state substantially. Although there those claiming 'money is free speech' as decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 558 U.S. 310 (2010), we reject that assertion as patently absurd. Establishing campaign finance rules in the state of Oregon would not only enhance democracy in the state and our ability to address critical environmental and social issues, it would also enhance our reputation in this arena throughout the nation.

We therefore urge the sponsors of SB1526 and SB1561, along with the Senate Committee on Rules to develop a composite bill that serves the purpose of each and comprises the best elements of both proposals.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan Journet".

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