



CONSOLIDATED OREGON INDIVISIBLE NETWORK

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To: House Committee on Rules
From: William Vollmer, Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN)
Re: HB4024, Campaign Finance Reform
Date: February 22, 2024

The Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) is an affiliation of grassroots organizations throughout the state that promotes progressive causes and legislation. The COIN coalition supports meaningful campaign finance reform and has previously endorsed HB3343, dealing with contribution limits, and the Small Donor Bill, HB2921 in previous legislative sessions. At present we are a strong supporter of Initiative Petition 9, for which supporters are currently gathering signatures to get it on the November ballot. IP9 was developed by a coalition of good government groups including Honest Elections Oregon, League of Women Voters of Oregon, OSPIRG, Common Cause, Alliance for Democracy, Independent Party of Oregon, Pacific Green Party, and Oregon Progressive Party.

We find it curious that, after 4 years of passing nothing on the topic, the Legislature now finds itself in a rush to hurry a bill through the short session. It would be nice to comment on the actual bill up for discussion, but the 43 page amendment 3 to be discussed at tomorrow's public hearing was only posted at 9:40 AM this morning (just 26½ hours prior to the hearing). What type of "public" hearing process is that?

According to reporting from Oregon Public Broadcasting (Dick VanderHart, OPB, Feb 14, 2024), prominent union and corporate lobbyists have been working behind the scenes with legislative leaders to craft this bill. Those presumably are the same lobbying interests who drafted IP42 to directly compete against IP9 this Fall. The Oregonian has previously reported (Hillary Borrud, Aug 21, 2023) that IP42 contains numerous loopholes that would negate any purported campaign finance reform the bill would supposedly enact. One can only imagine that the -3 amendment to HB4024 has similar, if not worse loopholes. Indeed, we understand that Honest Elections Oregon has now submitted very detailed testimony documenting the enormous loopholes in HB 4024-3.

Could it be that big money interests in Oregon, who benefit most from the status quo (no limits and limited disclosure requirements), are so scared of the real campaign finance reform promised by IP9 and worried about the ability of IP42 to derail it, that they have turned to the Legislature to pass their legislation for them? If this were a serious attempt at meaningful CFR it would have been conducted with more transparency and with the active involvement of the good government groups behind IP9.

If the Rules Committee is truly interested in passing the type of real, meaningful CFR that Oregonians, by their repeated votes on prior CFR-related ballot initiatives, have made very clear that they want to see, why not just pass IP9? At a minimum these deliberations should involve the good government groups behind IP9. To date that has not happened, and the good government groups were not provided with a draft of HB 4024-3 until yesterday.