

Testimony in opposition to HB 4024

To: Representative Julie Fahey, Chair, House Committee On Rules

Re: HB 4024-5 – Misleading Campaign Finance Limits and Disclosure – Oppose

First of all I want to acknowledge the work and concerns of our allies in the BIPOC and LGBTQ communities. They have accomplished a lot in recent years. That would not have been accomplished without financial resources.

Nevertheless, allowing large loopholes will only force our communities to endlessly chase money instead of effecting change by mobilizing our grassroots. Balancing proper financial support and grassroots support is delicate. Petition 9 does so, the proposed amendment does not. The proposed HB 4024 is smoke and mirrors, even with the few concessions added to this version.

What is dumbfounding is to change this bill as a referral to the ballot, at the very end of Friday, for a hearing first thing Monday morning; in effect giving people 5 business minutes to review. We are deeply disappointed and can only interpret this move as an effort to undermine the Democratic process.

You have a unique opportunity to enact public financing of campaigns. You can take that provision from an existing petition, consult with the experts from the Honest Elections coalition and replace the current amendment. This would bring people together while making history.

What is currently being played out is nothing short of collusion to exclude, delude, misrepresent and mislead Oregonians.

How can the committee pretend to provide transparency, due diligence and basic ethical standards when it submits a 43-page amendment one day before the public hearing?

This is not new though - foreseeing what underhanded tactics might be deployed against meaningful campaign finance reform is a constant exercise; we often joke about it in meetings. The intentional delays by pretend negotiations, sham proposals and use of phony technicalities have been well documented in the media.

And the fear tactics: Petition 9 does NOT limit effective fundraising; what it does is democratize the process to invest in campaigns, for example.

Here are the limits of money coming in and flowing out of campaigns

- [For Petition 9, a grassroots effort, allows for effective campaigns](#)
- [For the proposed HB 4024, corporate led, **EFFECTIVELY NO CAMPAIGN LIMITS**](#)

The obfuscation and shortsightedness: insisting on using “persons” (ie code name for “corporations”) instead of individuals as donors is unconscionable, taking advantage of the complexity of these issues to mislead those who do not have the long experience necessary to identify the loopholes in campaign finance legislation.

This is the cruel dishonesty of the proposed wording, deceiving BIPOC, LGBTQ, youth by holding out a few wins, when we all know that we are in deep trouble: 78% of Oregonians voted in favor of Measure 107.

If you leave a loophole, guess who is going to take advantage of it? Big Money. It might work for a few - but it does not resolve the deep-seated problems and increasing income disparity in the US. ***We/you will just have to raise more and more money. Does that sound familiar?*** The current proposal has so many loopholes it makes Swiss cheese pale in comparison.

If you need to further “study the issue” as in the initial “placeholder” bill, allow us to please direct you to a few recent sources:

- [Tracking campaign finance reform through editorials](#) - maybe this one is a good example: *Campaign finance reform bill missing the ‘reform,’* The Oregonian Editorial: May 26, 2021. HB 4024-5 has more and bigger loopholes than that 2021 bill.
- [Money in Oregon Politics: How the Legislature Deceives the Public on Campaign Finance Reform](#), by Marty Wilder, former legislator, February 23rd, 2024
- [Detailed account of problems in the current proposal](#), by Dan Meek, an excellent professor on the matter, for those who want to study Campaign Finance Reform

We are deeply opposed to HB 4024-5, the only substantive version of the bill in existence.

We encourage you instead to refer Petition 9 to the ballot and amend the current proposal to provide only a public financing option.

The attorneys and geeks of the Honest Elections coalition have researched extensively current finance programs throughout the country. They are willing and able to make a presentation of options and how they have worked in other states.

Since we had a “kicker” for two years in a row, there are certainly funds to support elections, the bedrock of democracy.

And again, Petition 9 does not impair proper financing of campaigns; it democratizes the process. What makes a campaign successful is the engagement of its grassroots.

We urge your opposition to HB 4024-5.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

David Rovics

One of 78% of ORegonians who voted for Measure 107