



HJR 205 A referral to allow limits to campaign contributions

Testimony for House Rules

As you are aware, last year we watched as a SJR on campaign spending was proposed and did not reach the floor. Meanwhile bills that benefitted major donors moved successfully through the legislature.

Oregon is one of only six states without campaign contribution limits. The Constitution does not have a provision allowing for such limits. Our elections have become among the most expensive in the country, with candidates needing to raise obscenely large amounts of money, often from well-heeled out-of-state donors. One House race in 2012 (a total of about 30,000 voters) saw a combined expenditure of about \$600,000. And one Senate race in 2014 (50,000 voters) cost over \$500,000.

This means that each vote cast cost about \$20 and \$10 respectively, far in excess of the typical expense of \$2.50 to \$3.00.

The lack of campaign contributions has made Oregon a target for out of state influences The cost of running in Oregon makes it very difficult for ordinary and civic-minded Oregonians to run for public office. This defeats our goal of a citizen legislature.

The preliminary “Fix” is simple. Pass HJR 205 that will set up a process for a referendum on the issue. HJR 205 this year would easily accomplish this step.

Holding a referendum is the next step, but the true “heavy lifting” will come once the legislature has this authority.

Remember, extreme expenditures on local elections divert funds that could be used elsewhere through charitable giving and requires legislators to be beholden to large financial interests. This is not the Oregon Way. It’s time to level the playing field.

IT IS TIME TO TAKE OUR STATE DEMOCRACY BACK FOR THE AVERAGE VOTER