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Historic Campaign Finance Reform Legislation Advances

A package of bills seeks to limit the influence of money in Oregon politics

SALEM – A historic package of campaign finance reform legislation passed the Oregon House of Representatives today. The bills seek to limit the influence of money in politics by capping campaign contributions and increasing transparency in elections.

Rep. Dan Rayfield (D-Corvallis), a long-time proponent of campaign finance reform in Oregon, was the chief sponsor of all three bills. He spoke on the floor about his advocacy 20 years earlier to collect signatures for local campaign finance limit campaigns.

“Today is the culmination of decades of work to stem the flood of cash pouring into our political system,” Rep. Rayfield said. “People have a right to know who influences our elections, and they have told us, time and again, that they want us to limit campaign contributions. These bills will move our state forward and work to build a better, more transparent system.”

The last time the Oregon Legislature approved significant changes to campaign finance was in 1975 when it repealed previous limits.

[House Bill 2714](#), which passed 35 to 23, enacts limits on campaign contributions and requires political committees to identify as caucus, measure, multicandidate, political party, recall or small donor. Each of those committees has rules limiting who they can receive donations from and how much they can receive. Small donor committees are limited to \$250 donations, while other races have limits of between \$1,000 and \$2,800, mirroring federal restrictions.

The legislation gives the Secretary of State and Attorney General the authority to enforce the limits with civil penalties up to 150 percent of the excess contribution.

“This bill is about empowering individual voices,” Rep. Rayfield added. “This bill will allow people to run campaigns based on support from individuals, not big-moned interests.”

Legislation also aims to shine a light on murky independent expenditure groups, those organized as non-profit 501(c)4 and 501(c)6, which are not currently required to disclose their donors but can work to influence elections. [House Bill 2983](#), which passed 39 to 17, requires those groups to disclose donors who gave more than \$10,000 in the current election cycle, if the groups spend

a certain amount on political communication - \$100,000 for statewide, PAC and measure communications, and \$25,000 for legislative communications.

“Sunlight, as they say, is the best disinfectant,” said bill sponsor Rep. Tiffany Mitchell. “Wealthy individuals and corporations should not be able to hide behind a veil of anonymity when they seek to influence voters in our state.”

Finally, the House passed [House Bill 2716](#), 44 to 10, which would require “paid for by” disclosures on political advertising. Specifically, it would require advertising in support or opposition of a candidate to disclose who paid for that advertising. Currently, election-related communications involving candidates seeking federal office are required to make similar disclosures.

“When it comes to elections, transparency is always the best policy,” said Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn). “Voters deserve to know who is paying for campaign advertising and what their interests are in influencing an election. This is a simple, but important step.”

Both House Bill 2714 and 2716 would only take effect if voters approve the constitutional amendment proposed in [House Joint Resolution 13](#). That referral would allow for campaign contribution limits to be established at the state and local level. The amendment is necessary because the Oregon Supreme Court has previously held that campaign contribution limits violate the free speech protections in the Oregon Constitution.

All three bills now go to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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