

LEW FREDERICK
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 22



OREGON STATE SENATE
900 COURT STREET ST NE
SALEM, OREGON 97301

March 5, 2026

TO: Obie Rutledge, Secretary of the Senate

RE: Vote Explanation – HB 4018 B (Campaign Finance Reform)

Secretary Rutledge,

Please accept my floor comments on HB 4018 B, attached below, as a vote explanation for the written record.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lew Frederick", written in a cursive style.

Lew Frederick

Senate Majority Whip | District 22 – N/NE Portland



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Floor Speech – HB 4018 B (Campaign Finance Reform)

Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I am rising in support of HB 4018, but I want to start off by saying very clearly: I am not excited about it. When we passed HB 4024 two years ago, I wasn't excited about that either. There are certain topics in this building whose conversations often veer into the academic, and we can forget how these wonky discussions really affect the millions of Oregonians who don't work inside this building. Campaign finance reform is one of those topics.

I have been a proponent of campaign finance reform for decades – getting big money, dark money, large corporate money out of our politics: not letting corporations, billionaires, and anonymous special interest groups buy our elections. I have long supported public financing of campaigns as the best way to get to that point, but I recognize there are more obstacles to that particular approach. I supported HB 4024 two years ago because I recognized then that it was far from perfect, but I believed it was progress. Shortly after, I started hearing from folks – from Democrats and Republicans, from labor and business, from our newly-elected Secretary of State, but most importantly, from community members: folks who were thinking about running for office for the first time, folks in local offices, folks who are from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. These are the folks I am the most concerned about.

I didn't hear from any of these folks that campaign finance reform was bad, or that Oregon should continue to do nothing about these issues. What I heard from all of them is that despite the best of intentions in HB 4024, it was deeply flawed – not in terms of policy goals, but in terms of application: in terms of the technical pieces that needed to work for the bill to work. I was hopeful that when the Secretary of State came to the legislature last session and detailed exactly how technically flawed that bill was, we would take action to fix it. We didn't. Now, we are in the 11th hour, and I do not like when we let things get to this place, but here we are.

I could go through each fix that HB 4018 makes – the summary is about six pages. I won't do that, but simply, this bill represents some truly very technical changes to make sure that we do not have a complete debacle on January 1, 2027, when this system comes into effect. And critically, contribution limits – the most crucial component of the bill – will still go into effect next year. The Secretary of State has told us that without this bill, we'll have to find \$25 million at a time when we can barely keep the lights on for so many critical programs. And with that \$25 million, there isn't even a guarantee that things will work as we'd like because of the flaws in HB 4024. It is our responsibility to not let that happen.

In Oregon, we are proud of our tradition of public service that is truly a grassroots approach – one where we can look around at our neighbors, folks with good character and good ideas – encourage them to run without any political experience, and they can win and be successful. I am not thrilled with this bill because I have heard from these folks that under our new system, there are still too many questions – too much ambiguity, too much complexity – to make it easy to play within the rules.

We should be setting up a system that makes it easier for folks to participate, not harder. Even with HB 4018, there are still issues, but it is progress. I have concerns about our elections going forward under the new system, but without doing anything, I am *very* worried. I am reassured that in conjunction with this bill, we also have SB 1502, which we just passed, which gives clear direction to the Secretary of State that we need a bill next session to ensure that implementation of our new system works. And I trust him to do that.

Colleagues, again, I am not excited about HB 4018. I do not want to vote yes. But these are not simply academic issues. Whenever we do anything about election reforms, it is marginalized communities who are the most disadvantaged when we don't do it right: the communities who have long struggled to get folks elected – communities who have just started to see real success in those efforts.

Let me give you a quick understanding of that. When I came into the legislature, we had two people of color in this legislature: myself and Jackie Winters. I used to joke that when I came over to the Senate, the whole capitol tilted just a little bit. The fact is, we have 24 now. Twenty-four people of color. That has changed a great deal, and that is because people began to understand just how things worked. And when we pass a law that changes the rules of the game, it is those communities that are the most affected because they do not have the same institutional ability to hire or even find the expensive attorneys and fancy consultants that folks will need. I recognize that the new system we have set up will continue to be far too complicated for many, even with HB 4018. But the alternative of doing nothing is much worse. That is not a position I like to be in, but it is the reality of where we are. Recognizing that reality, I hope you'll join me in voting yes. Thank you.