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PLATFORM POSITION ON UNDUE INFLUENCE, CORRUPTION AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Oregon can make consistent progress in education, health care, economic development, living wage jobs, and natural resource protection only by curtailing the power of private economic interests to unduly dominate our political process. We must restore fairness in political campaigns and achieve a government that represents the views and needs of all residents instead of allowing only a powerful few to call the tune by providing massive funds to enable some candidates to overwhelm others.

Because candidates throughout Oregon are now forced to treat campaign fundraising as an arms race to be won at all costs, they have become unduly beholden to the special interests able to contribute the big money. Campaign spending in Oregon has skyrocketed by a factor of 10 (1,000%) since 1996.

Big money in politics weakens our democratic institutions, undermines confidence in government, and excludes the vast majority of citizens from seeking public office. Strong campaign finance laws are critical to protect the integrity of Oregon elections

The State Integrity Investigation of the Center for Public Integrity in November 2015 graded Oregon an overall "F" in systems to avoid government corruption. Oregon ranked 2nd worst out of 50 states in control of "Political Financing," beating only Mississippi.

THE OREGONIAN in 2010 reported that Oregon candidates raise and spend more in their campaigns for the State Legislature, per capita, than in any state other than New Jersey (where candidates must buy into the expensive New York City and Philadelphia media markets). The amount spent on races for the Oregon Legislature has increased 10-fold over the past 20 years and by 50% since that OREGONIAN article. Most of those races are not competitive, as one



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party holds an overwhelming registration advantage in the district. But the average spent in 2014 by each of the top 10 Oregon Senate candidates rose to \$750,000; the top 10 Oregon House candidates in 2016 spent an average of \$825,000 each. Some candidates spent over \$70 per vote received; some spent over \$1 million for a single Senate seat or a single House seat.

The same big money arms race has infected local races. The last two winners of races for Mayor of Portland raised and spent \$1.7 million and \$1 million (in the primary alone).

Oregon also rates very low on effective disclosure of the funders of political ads. The Corporate Reform Coalition (75 progressive organizations) in 2012 concluded that only 6 states have worse systems for disclosing independent expenditures. They graded Oregon an "F" in disclosure, while Washington earned an "A." Now, 10 states require that political ads identify their top funders, including California and Washington. For 93 years, Oregon had a law requiring that political ads at least identify their sources, but that law was repealed in 2001 by a Republican-majority Legislature and a Democratic Governor. Neither of the largest parties wants disclosure, and the Oregon Legislature--dominated by those two parties--has never adopted limits on political contributions.

The Independent Party of Oregon (IPO) supports meaningful campaign finance reform for Oregon--currently one of only 6 states with no limits on campaign contributions.

The Oregon Legislature, or voters using the initiative process, should adopt (1) limits on political contributions, (2) disclosure and tagline requirements for political ads (including those funded by independent expenditures), and (3) limits on independent expenditures. (Although such limits are contrary to current 5-4 U. S. Supreme Court doctrine, doctrines change with personnel at the Court.) The model for such reform is Multnomah County Measure 26-184 of 2016, adopted by a county-wide "yes" vote of 89%.