

## Reform: Oregon currently labeled 'pay-to-play' territory

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FairElections Oregon is a joint venture between Harry Lonsdale, a three-time candidate for U.S. Senate, and Dan Meek, a public interest lawyer based in Portland. The organization is focusing on two goals: changing the way money flows into campaigns and reducing the influence of large corporations, unions and lobbying groups.

FairElections Oregon's petition plans are twofold: The first goal is to gather 150,000 signatures to place Petition 8 on the ballot. Petition 8 is a one-sentence Constitutional amendment allowing Oregonians to enact campaign finance limits. Second, FairElections Oregon must receive another 100,000 signatures to place Petition 37 on the same ballot. Petition 37 would enact a comprehensive system of campaign finance restrictions.

Petition 37 would ban all corporations, labor unions and other entities from making campaign contributions. The petition would heavily restrict how much money individuals could donate to candidate campaigns as well — \$500 in any statewide partisan race, \$200 in any statewide nonpartisan or judicial race and \$100 for any non-statewide race, which includes city council campaigns.

Among other monetary caps would be a \$20,000 limit on campaign funds from a candidate's personal account.

The debate over campaign finance reform is not new. Legislation restricting campaign donations has existed since the days of the Tammany Hall scandal in 1932.

The first state laws regulating campaign finance reform passed in the later 19th century. These laws generally related to minimal disclosure requirements.

In 1897, four states took a greater step toward finance reform, banning all corporate contributions. The first federal law, banning some corporate contributions, was passed in 1907.

For six decades, campaign finance reform remained on the periphery, revised incrementally by only a few laws. In 1971, major reforms came with the passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971. In 1974 FECA was amended, establishing a framework of contribution and spending limits.

The 1990s saw a resurgence in campaign finance reform legislation, though it either languished in committee or failed to pass the House or Senate. That changed March 27, 2002, when President Bush signed legislation enacting new limits on campaign fundraising. The legislation, supported by Reps. Chris Shays (R-Conn.) and Martin Meehan (D-Mass.), put limitations on so-called "soft money" contributions to parties.

In 1994, Oregon voters enacted their own campaign finance reform law with a 72 percent vote. However, in 1997 the Oregon State Supreme Court ruled the reforms unconstitutional, saying they violated free speech provisions within the state Constitution. Petition 8 would amend the constitution to make campaign finance reform constitutional in Oregon.

Today, this is where Oregon stands. It is one of five states without campaign finance reform legislation. These states are considered "pay-to-play" territories by campaign finance reform proponents who, like the organizers of FairElections Oregon, believe that large corporations, powerful unions and savvy lobbying organizations have usurped the political process, donating massive amounts of money in return for

political favors — a quid pro quo of democratic influence.

Opponents of campaign finance reform argue that current regulations on campaign donations are sufficient and that further legislation would stifle free speech.

According to the CATO Institute, a Washington, D.C., policy think tank, campaign finance reform is predicated on false assumptions.

Bradley A. Smith, an assistant professor at Capital University Law School, wrote in a CATO-sponsored policy paper titled "Campaign Finance Regulation: Faulty Assumptions and Undemocratic Consequences," that the first assumption of campaign finance reform is that too much money is entering the political process.

"The second assumption of campaign finance reform is that money buys elections in some manner incompatible with a functioning democracy," Smith wrote.

According to Smith, when a candidate spends a large amount of money, he or she often sees a jump in his or her poll numbers. This can, but does not always, result in an overall victory.

"Correlation is not the same as cause and effect, and one must be careful not to make too much of such simple numbers," Smith wrote. "The correlation may stem simply from the desire of donors to contribute to candidates who are likely to win, in which case the ability to win attracts money rather than the other way around."

Smith writes that high campaign spending does not always equal victories. Michael Huffington, Lewis Lehrman, Mark Dayton, John Connally and Clayton Williams spent lavishly, and they all lost their bids for elected office.

"It's one of those issues that's not liberal and it's not conservative; it's bipartisan," said Tony Andersen. "I tend to stay away from radical issues, which was why I was attracted to this one."

Andersen said that his experience has been enriching because, unlike other political internships where interns stand on street corners asking passers-by for petition signature, he has become a part of the political process.

But Andersen, and the other volunteers and interns for FairElections Oregon, still have to gather 250,000 signatures by November, 2006.

One way of garnering support is by getting the community involved. In the first of several planned events, FairElections Oregon is organizing a fundraising event for the month of August. Titled "Take a Gamble on Democracy," the event will feature Texas Hold 'Em and Black Jack, which will result in prizes for the participants. The event will take place at the Eugene City Brewery in the basement of the Rogue Brewery located at 844 Olive St. on Aug. 5.

Other FairElections Oregon volunteers affiliated with the University are Shaun Cook, a Planning, Public Policy and Management undergraduate and Tyrone Reitman, a recently graduated Planning, Public Policy and Management masters student.

Andersen said that he believes in campaign finance reform because it is about people power rather than party power.

"When you have corporations just throwing money into the political process, it's common sense (to fight against it)," said Andersen.

and answer questions on any topic.

The sessions, which are usually held on the last Tuesday of each month, are in a different location each time.

City councilors Bonny Bettman, Ward 1, and Betty Taylor, Ward 2, will also be there to meet with constituents.

For more information, call the City Manager's office at 682-5010.

— Gabe Bradley

## Display: University impacts Oregon newspapers

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Gleason said Allen Hall was an appropriate location for the hall of fame because the University's school of journalism has had a strong impact on the direction of Oregon newspapers over the years.

"Seven living members of the hall of fame were at the reception the other day, and of the seven, four of them are graduates of the (University's) school of journalism," Gleason said. "Symbolically it was a nice blend of showing the involvement of the school in Oregon newspapers."

"The ONPA was housed in Allen

Hall for many years," Gleason said.

Emphasizing the role of the journalism school in Oregon newspapers is one of Gleason's priorities.

"That's an important thing to me," he said.

Gleason said he tried to emphasize this theme in his remarks at the dedication ceremony.

Gleason also said the location of the display within Allen Hall is particularly appropriate. Since the Hall of Fame is directly across from the student resource center, many students will have a chance to see the display.

"I think it's a wonderful reminder and perhaps inspiration to current

students," Gleason said.

He said that seeing some of the great faces in the history of Oregon newspapers may encourage future journalists.

"I can take some inspiration from them," Gleason said.

He said all 49 people in the hall of fame can provide him with personal inspiration. Eric Allen, the first dean of the school of journalism and the namesake of Allen hall, is particularly inspiring, Gleason said.

From Allen, Gleason said he can draw "inspiration every day."

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### IN BRIEF

#### Mayor's monthly session meets at Market of Choice

Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy will hold her monthly One-on-One public meet and greet session at the Market of Choice on 2858 Willamette St. tonight.

From 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., Piercy will meet with any member of the public