

# POWER SHIFT

*Ralph Nader says Americans have the potential to reclaim political clout from corporations. He'll visit Portland to promote his new book – and a Multnomah County campaign finance measure.*

**BY EMILY GREEN**  
STAFF WRITER

**R**elentless consumer advocate and frequent presidential candidate Ralph Nader is coming to Portland to discuss his new book, "Breaking Through Power: It's Easier Than We Think."

At 149 pages, his new release from City Lights Books is a quick and captivating read that seeks to enrage its audience before motivating readers toward a pragmatic solution.

Nader succinctly lays out the ways Americans have handed over their common properties and constitutional rights to corporations and corrupt politicians, giving way to what he says is now a plutocracy featuring two parties beholden to special interests, not the people.

He also willfully weaves in instances when relatively small movements of committed citizens have won major victories against seemingly insurmountable corporate power.

For example, he points out that the fight for a \$15 minimum wage made headlines and has led to wage increases in some areas because fewer than 73,000 people spent a few hours each week promoting the idea. To put that in perspective – that's a major victory for millions of workers, resulting from the efforts of a group whose size equates to about 3 percent of the Portland metro area's population.

Nader ends "Breaking Through Power" with a bipartisan-supported agenda and a blueprint for how a small number of dedicated Americans could easily work to take back the country for everyone. He argues that if just 1 percent of the population worked together to put pressure on Congress from each district, it could make all the difference.

One example of citizens attempting to take back power will be on the ballot in Multnomah County this November, he said.

Measure 26-184 seeks to limit campaign contributions in county commissioner races, but because it includes a provision on independent expenditures, its proponents say it could ultimately be used to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's notorious Citizens United decision.

Nader will be at Powell's City of Books at noon Saturday, Oct. 22, to discuss his new title. Later that day, he'll deliver a speech at a fundraiser for the campaign finance reform ballot measure. The fundraiser begins at 7 p.m.

at the First Unitarian Church of Portland.

Nader recently spoke with Street Roots by phone from Washington, D.C., where he had just hosted a four-day conference where 91 prominent civic leaders from across the nation joined him in giving lectures under the banner of "Breaking Through Power."

He said it was one of the broadest gatherings of civic leaders the nation has ever seen – and not one major media outlet covered it. Even The Nation, an event sponsor, failed to send a reporter. The independent media's failure to prop up progressive leaders, the junk-filled abyss that dominates our public airwaves, and his new book were among the topics we discussed.

**Emily Green:** *In "Breaking Through Power," you write, "Our country has more problems than it should tolerate and more solutions than it uses." How did we get to a place where we are so complacent?*

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that's what happens when you have inequality of power.

There's a lot of talk about inequality of wealth – greater than any other Western country – but there's not enough talk about inequality of power – power in the hands of the few deciding for the many. When you have that kind of situation, then you have the few, who have vested interest in fossil fuels and nuclear, thwarting for decades the onset of energy efficiency and renewable energy, so even though the solutions are on

## The little measure that could

Measure 26-84 supporters say the Multnomah County campaign finance reform initiative could ultimately be used to overturn the Citizens United decision. **Page 7**

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