

Groups push limits on Oregon campaign contributions

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — As one of several states that doesn't limit how much individuals, businesses or unions can contribute to candidates, parties or causes, Oregon has earned an "A plus" rating from a Virginia-based group founded by an advocate of deregulating campaign finance.

The rating comes as supporters of campaign finance reform are renewing efforts to amend the Oregon Constitution to allow such limits.

Oregon, Alabama, Nebraska, Utah and Virginia each got a perfect score in rankings released this week by the Institute for Free Speech.

"When people want to change government, they donate to and volunteer for candidates, parties and groups," the institute's leaders wrote in a foreword to the rankings. "Restrictions on these contributions protect incumbents and result in less speech."

The Institute for Free Speech was founded in 2005 by Bradley Smith, a proponent of deregulating campaign finance and a former commissioner and chairman of the Federal Election Commission under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The organization has filed amicus briefs and pursued litigation involving campaign finance limits and provided co-counsel in the case *SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission*.

The outcome of that case allowed so-called "super PACs" to flourish. Super PACs are a type of political action committee that can raise unlimited amounts of money, but can't contribute to or coordinate directly with parties or candidates.

As of March 25, Super PACs have raised \$259 million and spent about \$58 million in the current election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

David Delk, chair of the Oregon Progressive Party, says unlimited political contributions can reduce voters' faith in the democratic process.

The Oregon Progressive Party is one of several groups collecting signatures for a citizen initiative petition to amend the state's constitution to allow limits on campaign contributions and



File photo

Effort to impose limits on campaign contributions comes as a group gives Oregon an "A plus" rating for allowing unlimited contributions to candidates, parties and campaigns.

expenditures. If supporters get enough signatures, the measure would be on the statewide ballot in 2020.

Delk points to a \$250,000 contribution from Nike founder Phil Knight to the campaign of then-Gov. John Kitzhaber, a Democrat seeking reelection, in 2014. In late 2012 Knight had lobbied Kitzhaber for assurances the company's tax structure wouldn't change as it made a planned expansion. The Legislature passed a measure in special session giving Kitzhaber the power to grant such certainty as long as the company met certain benchmarks.

For Delk, that scenario created the appearance of a quid pro quo.

"It gives credence to the view that the system is rigged," Delk said.

Delk disagrees that limits on campaign contributions constitute restrictions on free speech.

"Money is property," Delk said. "And when you spend it, it should be subject to regulation."

Neither the Democratic Party of Oregon or the Oregon Republican Party have taken a position on the proposed initiative, the parties confirmed Tuesday.

Daniel Weiner, senior counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice's Democracy Program, says unlimited political contributions create the risk of corruption.

"It can contribute to a negative climate in terms of ethics, but that doesn't mean it necessarily will," Weiner said.

Other factors can mitigate unlimited campaign donations, Weiner said. For example, Oregon also encourages popular political participation by virtue of

being a vote-by-mail state with an automatic voter registration law.

Weiner is skeptical of the argument that incumbents benefit more from campaign contribution limits.

While very low limits on contributions can "create a system where it's hard to amass that critical amount of seed money you need to launch a campaign," incumbents typically have more to offer wealthy donors, Weiner said.

The latest initiative petition is not the first effort to create limits on political contributions in Oregon.

In 2006, Oregon voters approved Ballot Measure 47, which created limits on individual donations to state and local elected office, and unions, corporations or other entities from payments called "independent expenditures" supporting or opposing a candidate or political party.

However, Measure 46, which went before voters in the same election and would have amended the state's constitution to allow the limits in Measure 47, was defeated.

Supporters had initially wanted to get the constitutional amendment on the ballot this year, but ran out of time to collect enough signatures after the Oregon Supreme Court reviewed public comments on the proposed measure, Delk said.

On the local level, Multnomah County and other supporters are currently appealing a March 6 circuit court ruling that held county limits on campaign contributions are unconstitutional.

Weiner says Americans are witnessing the effects of political giving on both politics and public policy — he points to the recent passage of sweeping federal tax reforms as an example of donors' political influence.

The role of money in politics also contributed to a sense of "disempowerment," Weiner said, that drove the rise of candidates with populist appeal such as now-President Donald Trump and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

"What we're seeing right now in our country is that campaign finance rules and how we deal with money in politics matters," Weiner said.

NORTHWEST BRIEFLY

Eugene, and Springfield crime spree puts University of Oregon on alert

EUGENE (AP) — It's spring break at the University of Oregon, but not for its police department.

The Register-Guard reports the university has increased patrols as officers look for the criminals responsible for four robberies and two holdup attempts on or near campus in recent weeks.

Those crimes are among the dozen robberies that have taken place in Eugene and Springfield over the past month. The latest robbery happened Friday night, when a man with a gun robbed an employee at a pizza place in west Eugene.

The crime spree has put UO students on alert and their parents on edge. In addition to having more officers on nightly patrol, the university has extended the hours of its shuttle service.

Man sues Portland, mayor for records on homeless shelter project

PORTLAND (AP) — A Portland man has sued the city and Mayor Ted Wheeler, claiming the mayor's office has improperly kept secret records about a homeless shelter project.

Tyler Bechtel, who works as an Oregon State Police detective, filed a public records request for city and county emails related to the shelter plan. Bechtel claims Wheeler's office acknowledged it had some records, but a city paralegal withheld an email and attachment, saying state law allows it to keep the records secret because they contain exempt financial and personal information and because the records contain "internal advisory communications," according to records.

Bechtel claims the city erred on procedural grounds because it should have given him copies of the records with confidential portions blacked-out. The city disagreed in its own filings.

Wheeler's office declined to comment, *The Oregonian/OregonLive* reported.

Bechtel and other critics of the shelter say it would be too close to a school and too far from the offices of social services agencies, and may pose a public safety problem.

"We believe that a shelter might be the right idea but not in this location,"

Bechtel said, who has banded together with other east Portland residents as an organization called Southeast Allied Communities, which bills itself as opposed to the shelter.

The proposed shelter, which county commissioners approved in January, would be at Foster Road and Southeast 61st Avenue in Portland and plans to shelter up to 120 people.

Teen who lost leg from lawn mower awarded \$12M

EUGENE (AP) — An Oregon teenager who sued her father and a lawn mower manufacturer after she lost her left leg when she was a toddler has been awarded more than \$12 million.

The Lane County jury sided with 14-year-old Isabelle Norton in Monday's verdict, finding her father Kirk Norton and Deere & Co. at fault, *The Register-Guard* reports.

Kirk Norton had backed over his daughter with a riding lawn mower outside their Springfield home in May 2006. Lawyers for the teen had argued that the father was negligent and the lawn mower had inadequate safety features.

The manufacturer was ordered to pay \$9.5 million. Kirk Norton was ordered to pay about \$2.7 million.

"It's been a long nine years of waiting for this verdict," Isabelle Norton said. "I'm very grateful to the jury and for my attorneys for all the hard work they did. Now I just hope that John Deere and other manufacturers will change the design so that no one else will have to go through what I've been through."

Deere attorney James Brogan told jurors that the mower that Norton bought and used in his backyard had met all applicable standards and contained no manufacturing defects. "It was designed with everything necessary to make it safe," Brogan said.

The teen's lawyer Don Corson said the case could drag on for several more years should Deere seek an appeal. Deere initially won the case in 2009, but that verdict was appealed, leading to this trial.

Kirk Norton, meanwhile, was arrested for child molestation in 2010, and he pleaded guilty in the case one year later. He's now serving a 17-year prison sentence. Norton's criminal case was unrelated to Isabelle, according to one of her lawyers.

Correction

Gwen Fjeld is the president of the Pendleton Rotary Club. An incorrect title was attributed in the article "Fireworks show ready to re-ignite," Page 1A, March 27.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather Forecast

TODAY

Breezy with clouds and sun

THURSDAY

Clouds and sun

FRIDAY

Intervals of clouds and sun

SATURDAY

Partly sunny

SUNDAY

Clouds and occasional sunshine

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
58°	37°	60°	42°	62°
37°	60°	42°	62°	41°
59°	40°	60°	42°	65°

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
63°	39°	65°	44°	67°
39°	65°	44°	67°	40°
64°	43°	65°	46°	

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	56°	39°
Normals	57°	37°
Records	76° (1952)	23° (1975)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date 1.38"
Normal month to date 1.24"
Year to date 3.71"
Last year to date 6.19"
Normal year to date 3.75"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	60°	42°
Normals	61°	37°
Records	78° (2015)	15° (1944)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.75"
Normal month to date 0.78"
Year to date 2.38"
Last year to date 4.84"
Normal year to date 3.02"

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Clouds and sun today, but low clouds across the north; pleasant in the south.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Clouds and sun today, except cloudy near the Cascades. Partly cloudy tonight.

Western Washington: Cloudy today and tonight. Low clouds tomorrow; a passing shower at the coast.

Eastern Washington: Mostly cloudy today.

Cascades: Variable cloudiness today. Partly cloudy tonight. Clouds and limited sun tomorrow.

Northern California: Sunshine today; pleasant in central parts. A moonlit sky tonight.

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	52	39	c	53	40	c
Baker City	58	31	pc	59	32	pc
Bend	58	32	c	62	34	pc
Brookings	63	46	pc	65	46	pc
Burns	57	29	pc	59	29	pc
Enterprise	51	32	pc	54	35	pc
Eugene	58	35	c	60	37	c
Heppner	56	37	pc	61	42	pc
Hermiston	63	39	pc	65	44	pc
John Day	56	34	pc	59	34	pc
Klamath Falls	61	30	pc	65	32	pc
La Grande	55	34	pc	58	36	pc
Meacham	51	32	pc	55	35	pc
Medford	67	39	pc	71	41	pc
Newport	52	38	c	55	41	pc
North Bend	56	40	pc	59	43	pc
Ontario	64	38	pc	64	38	pc
Pasco	63	35	c	64	39	pc
Pendleton	58	37	pc	60	42	pc
Portland	57	40	c	59	43	c
Redmond	61	31	c	66	33	c
Salem	59	37	c	61	39	c
Spokane	52	32	c	51	37	c
Ukiah	51	30	pc	56	34	c
Vancouver	56	38	c	58	40	c
Walla Walla	58	41	c	60	45	pc
Yakima	63	37	c	65	39	c

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	77	45	pc	68	39	pc
Hong Kong	79	70	s	78	69	pc
Jerusalem	77	56	pc	61	48	pc
London	47	35	r	50	42	r
Mexico City	81	52	pc	81	53	pc
Moscow	30	11	pc	32	15	c
Paris	55	37	r	54	40	t
Rome	61	51	pc	64	53	pc
Seoul	64	49	s	65	45	pc
Sydney	81	67	s	81	68	s
Tokyo	69	53	s	69	50	s

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	60	38	s	64	40	s
Atlanta	78	58	pc	72	57	c
Baltimore	56	48	c	71	59	c
Billing	44	30	sn	48	31	pc
Birmingham	80	64	pc	72	52	t
Boise	58	36	pc	59	39	pc
Boston	51	40	pc	52	45	r
Charleston, SC	77	60	pc	79	62	pc
Chicago	58	41	pc	48	31	r
Cleveland	51	44	c	55	35	r
Dallas	66	53	t	68	49	c
Denver	50	26	sh	53	29	sf
Detroit	56	40	pc	51	30	r
El Paso	70	50	s	75	50	s
Fairbanks	31	16	pc	33	15	c
Fargo	40	20	sf	38	17	pc
Honolulu	81	67	s	83	69	pc
Houston	79	64	t	85	59	sh
Indianapolis	60	47	c	56	36	r
Jacksonville	80	58	s	83	60	pc
Kansas City	55	38	pc	51	32	pc
Las Vegas	77	58	r	79	58	s
Little Rock	67	56	r	69	44	pc
Los Angeles	78	56	s	79	56	pc

UV INDEX TODAY

1 3 4 3 3 1

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: As spotty snow affects the North Central states, drenching rain is in store from Texas to Pennsylvania with showers for the rest of the Northeast today. Severe storms will erupt near the Gulf coast.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous