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Accessible politics, accountable government

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Checkbook Democracy? Loren Parks Contributes 50% of Total Cash to Likely 2008 Initiatives, All to Walker, Sizemore, and Mannix Initiatives

Loren Parks has contributed over \$1.1 million to eight initiatives from conservative activists Russell Walker, Bill Sizemore, and Kevin Mannix. Parks' financial support comprises 50 percent of the signature-gathering fundraising total of \$2,276,050 for the eleven measures considered likely to be on the November 2008 ballot.

(See chart 1 for a summary of donors whose signature-gathering contributions totaled \$10,000 or more and chart 2 for a description of each initiative as well as its chief petitioners and top contributors. Fundraising figures are as reported through July 1 on ORESTAR and include cash and in-kind contributions and loans; amounts could change due to auditing or amendments.)

Loren Parks gave an additional \$224,000 to signature gathering efforts on petitions that were either withdrawn or not submitted to the Secretary of State. In all, during the signature-gathering season leading up to this fall's election, Parks gave \$1,352,500.

The previous top donor record was set in 2002 when Parks gave over \$300,000 to three initiative campaigns. Parks is giving even more money to a broader range of initiatives aimed for the 2008 ballot. Parks, who now lives in Nevada, is the owner of an Oregon-based medical equipment company and has a history of giving frequently to conservative candidates and measures in Oregon.

Hire Calling Public Affairs, an organization with affiliations to Richard Wendt, is the primary funder of two other Bill Sizemore initiatives. This company gave \$325,000 or 14 percent of total signature gathering contributions to initiatives likely to qualify for the 2008 ballot.

It is anticipated that there will be six Bill Sizemore measures on the November ballot with four already receiving an assessment by the Secretary of State that the qualifying threshold has been met.

Less dominated by one major donor is Phil Keisling's open/top two primary initiative that has raised \$414,788 with the top donation of \$60,000 from Brett Wilcox, head of Summit Power.

If the fundraising by the open/top two primary proposal is deducted from signature gathering contributions to those initiatives anticipated to be on the general election ballot, contributions from Loren Parks comprise 61% of petition circulation fundraising.

The domination of large contributions to the 2008 chief petitioner committees is illustrated by only 10 percent of contributions coming as donations of less than \$10,000. (See chart 1.)

“Ballot measure politics are typically dominated by big donors,” said Janice Thompson, executive director of Democracy Reform Oregon. “But the level of domination by one person in determining what measures will be on the 2008 ballot raises the question of whether or not Oregon’s initiative system is direct democracy or democracy according to Loren Parks.”

Chart 1 – Top Contributors to Initiative Committees Anticipated to be on 2008 ballot

Contributor	Contribution	% of total contributions	Contributions to initiative(s) (descriptions and chief petitioners in chart 2)
Loren Parks	\$1,128,500	50%	IP 3 - \$122,500 = 79% of IP 3 total
			IP 19 - \$123,000 = 87% of IP 19 total
			IP 20 - \$121,000 = 78% of IP 20 total
			IP 25 - \$125,000 = 82% of IP 25 total
			IP 40 - \$122,500 = 68% of IP 40 total
			IP 41 - \$179,166 = 79% off IP 41 total
			IP 51 - \$167,667 = 69% of IP 51 total
			IP 53 - \$167,667 = 69% of IP 53 total
Hire Calling Public Affairs (Richard Wendt)	\$325,000	14%	IP 21 - \$175,000 = 99% of IP 21 total
			IP 78 - \$150,000 = 82% of IP 78 total
IP 78 – Require Legislative Supermajority to Declare Emergency PAC	\$86,773	4%	IP 3 - \$9,393 = 6% of IP 3 total
			IP 19 - \$17,292 = 12% of IP 19 total
			IP 20 - \$32,447= 21% of IP 20 total
			IP 25 - \$27,641= 18% of IP 25 total
Brett Wilcox	\$60,000	3%	IP 109 - \$60,000 = 14.5% of IP 109 total
IP 53 – Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse	\$50,212	2%	IP 40 - \$24,596 =14% of IP 40 total
			IP 41 - \$13,386 = 6% of IP 41 total
			IP 78 - \$12,230 = 7% of IP 78 total
Freedomworks	\$35,000	1.5%	IP 51 - \$17,500 =7% of IP 51 total
			IP 53 - \$17,500 =7% of IP 53 total
Oregon Tort Reform Coalition/Oregon Litigation Fairness Project	\$32,700	1%	IP 51 - \$16,350 =7% of IP 51 total
			IP 53 - \$16,350 = 7% of IP 53 total
Kevin L. Mannix, PC	\$32,003	1%	IP 40 - \$8,639 =5% of IP 40 total
			IP 41 - \$8,639 = 4% of IP 41 total
			IP 51 - \$7,362 = 3% of IP 51 total
			IP 53 - \$7,362 = 3% of IP 53 total
IP 132 – Hold Criminals Accountable PAC (99% of money from Loren Parks	\$28,706	1%	IP 3 - \$1,930 = 1% of IP 3 total
			IP 19 - \$1,710 = 1% of IP 19 total
			IP 20 - \$1,922 = 1% of IP 20 total
			IP 21 - \$1,675 = 1% of IP 21 total
			IP 25 - \$201 = 0.1% of IP 25 total
			IP 41 - \$12,998 = 6% of IP 41 total
			IP 78 - \$8,270 = 4.5% of IP 78 total
IP 21 – Fairness in Home Improvement PAC	\$21,543	1%	IP 3 - \$21,543 =14% of IP 3 total
Columbia Helicopters	\$20,000	1%	IP 51 - \$10,000 = 4% of IP 51 total
			IP 53 - \$10,000 = 4% of IP 53 total
Andrew Ferguson	\$15,000	0.7%	IP 109 - \$15,000 = 4% of IP 109 total
Glenn Pelikan	\$15,000	0.7%	IP 51 - \$7,500 = 3% of 51 total
			IP 53 - \$7,500 = 3% of IP 53 total

Regence Group/ Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield	\$15,000	0.7%	IP 109 - \$15,000 = 4% of IP 109 total
Knute Buehler	\$14,500	0.6%	IP 109 - \$14,500 = 3.5% of IP 109 total
John Gray	\$12,500	0.5%	IP 109 - \$12,500 = 3% of IP 109 total
Committee for a Unified Party	\$11,500	0.5%	IP 109 - \$11,500 = 3% of IP 109 total
ADEC Inc	\$10,000	0.5%	IP 51 - \$2,500 = 1% of 51 total IP 53 - \$2,500 = 1% of IP 53 total IP 109 - \$5,000 = 1% of IP 109 total
Richard Alexander, Associated Oregon Industries, William Campbell, Jeannine Cowles, Platt Electric Supply, Standard Insurance Co., William Swindells, and Willamette Dental Management Group	\$10,000 each	0.5% each	P 109 - \$10,000 each = 2% of IP 109 total
Contributions ≤\$100	\$19,650	1%	IP 51 - \$75 = 0.1% of IP 51 total IP 53 - 75 = 0.1% of IP 53 total IP 109 = \$19,500 = 5% of IP 109 total
Other Contributions	\$212,241	9%	
Total	\$2,276,050*	100%	

*Based on September 2007 chief petitioner campaign finance disclosure reports and reports available on July 2, 2008 through ORESTAR. Figures may include cash and in-kind contributions as well as loans and could change due to auditing or amendments. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Loren Parks is the major donor for eight initiatives. (See chart 2.) He is the major financial backer for four initiatives from Bill Sizemore. On three of these proposals, Russ Walker of the Oregon chapter of Freedomworks is also a chief petitioner. The three Sizemore-Walker initiatives bankrolled by Parks call for making federal income taxes fully deductible on state forms (IP 3), restricting bilingual education to only two years (IP 19), and not allowing use of seniority in teacher pay and hiring decisions (IP 20).

The other Sizemore measure (IP 25) for which Parks is the major donor penalizes for use of political funds collected with public resources.

Most of money from Loren Parks is reported as in-kind contributions to Democracy Direct, a signature-gathering firm run by Tim Trickey. Trickey also joins Sizemore as a chief petitioner on IP 3 anticipated to be on the November 2008 ballot.

Hire Calling Public Affairs in Klamath Falls has made the second largest contribution to signature gathering efforts in the 2008 initiative season. (See charts 1 and 2.) Their support is also primarily reported as in-kind contributions to Democracy Direct and totals \$325,000. This money is going to two Sizemore measures, one that would no longer require building permits for projects under \$35,000 (IP 21) and another that restricts use of emergency clauses by the legislature (IP 78). Larry George joins Sizemore as chief petitioner on the proposal to require supermajority vote for emergency designations on bills.

According to state corporations records, the president of Hire Calling Public Affairs is John Courtney who is also president of the American Institute for Full Employment (AIFE) that has offices in Washington, D.C. and Klamath Falls. Richard Wendt is listed as president of AIFE on 990 filings with the IRS. Wendt is also the founder and chairman of Jeld-Wen, Inc., the Klamath Fall-based door and window manufacturing company that is now international in scope.

Kevin Mannix is working on four initiatives that are getting the lion share of their financial support from Parks' checkbook. (See charts 1 and 2.) In-kind contributions from his law firm worth \$32,003 make Mannix the eighth highest signature-gathering contributor for 2008 initiatives. His support focuses on two crime-related measures (IPs 40 and 41) on which he is chief petitioner, as well as two measures related to plaintiff attorney fees (IP 51) and frivolous lawsuit penalties (IP 53) on which Russ Walker is a chief petitioner.

In all, Russ Walker of Freedomworks is a chief petitioner on five initiatives likely to face votes in November. Bill Sizemore is a fellow petitioner on three initiatives and Kevin Mannix has made in-kind contributions to the other two. Walker's involvement in 2008 initiatives, however, looks different from the role he played in qualifying petitions to the 2006 ballot. Walker's Oregon Citizens for a Sound Economy committee spent \$165,000 on signature gathering to qualify two petitions for the last general election. Thus far in the 2008 initiative season Walker is relying on significant financial support from Loren Parks while Freedomworks has contributed \$35,000.

The flow of money in the form of in-kind contributions between Sizemore, Mannix, and Walker initiative signature gathering is also illustrated in charts 1 and 2.

Chart 2 – Total Contributions, Subject, Chief Petitioners, and Major Contributors

IP #	Subject/Chief Petitioners	Total Contributions	Major Contributors and percent of total contributions
3	Statutory: Unlimited deductibility of federal taxes	\$155,656	\$122,500 (79%) from Loren Parks \$21,553 (14%) from IP 21 PAC \$9,393 (6%) from Hold Criminals Accountable PAC \$279 (0.2%) from Democracy Direct
	<i>Bill Sizemore, Timothy R. Trickey, Russell R. Walker</i>		
19	Statutory: Restricts bilingual education to only two years	\$142,254	\$123,000 (87%) from Loren Parks \$17,292 (12%) from IP 78 PAC \$1,710 (1.2%) from Hold Criminals Accountable PAC \$253 (0.2%) from Democracy Direct
	<i>Alan Grosso, Bill Sizemore, Russell R. Walker</i>		
20	Statutory: Bar use of seniority in teacher pay and hiring	\$155,620	\$121,000 (78%) from Loren Parks \$32,447 (21%) from IP 78 PAC \$1,922 (1.2%) from Hold Criminals Accountable PAC \$252 (0.2%) from Democracy Direct
	<i>Bill Sizemore, Russell R. Walker</i>		
21	Statutory: Building permits not needed for projects of less than \$35,000	\$176,936	\$175,000 (99%) from Hire Calling Public Affairs (Richard Wendt) \$1,675 (1%) from Hold Criminals Accountable PAC \$261 (0.1%) from Democracy Direct
	<i>Alan Grosso, Bill Sizemore</i>		
25	Statutory: Penalizes for use of political funds collected with public resources	\$153,036	\$125,000 (82%) from Loren Parks \$27,641 (18%) from IP 78 PAC \$201 (0.1%) from Hold Criminals Accountable PAC \$194 (0.1%) from Democracy Direct
	<i>Bill Sizemore</i>		
40	Statutory: Mandatory sentences for identity theft, forgery, drug & burglary	\$180,955	\$122,500 (68%) from Loren Parks \$24,596 (14%) from IP 53 PAC \$24,596 (14%) from IP 51 PAC \$8,639 (5%) from Kevin L. Mannix PC \$318 (0.2%) from Democracy Direct \$307 (0.2%) from Oregon Excellence, LLC DBA Oregon Crime Fighters
	<i>Duane Fletchall, Steve Beck, Kevin L. Mannix</i>		

41	Amends Constitution: 15% of lottery profits for crime prevention, investigation & prosecution	\$228,270	\$179,166 (79%) from Loren Parks \$13,386 (6%) from IP 53 PAC \$13,386 (6%) from IP 51 PAC \$12,998 (6%) Hold Criminals Accountable PAC \$8,639 (4%) from Kevin L. Mannix PC \$377 (0.2%) from Oregon Excellence, LLC DBA Oregon Crime Fighters \$318 (0.1) from Democracy Direct
	<i>Duane Fletchall, Steve Beck, Kevin L. Mannix</i>		
51	Statutory: Limits fees paid to plaintiff attorneys	\$242,907	\$167,667 (69%) from Loren Parks \$17,500 (7%) from Freedomworks \$16,350 (7%) from Oregon Tort Reform Coalition/OR Litigation Fairness Project \$10,000 (4%) Columbia Helicopters \$7,500 (3%) Glenn Pelikan \$7,362 (3%) from Kevin L. Mannix PC \$16,527 (7%) other donations
	<i>Michael Reeder, Glenn Pelikan, Russell R. Walker</i>		
53	Statutory: Penalizes lawyers who file frivolous lawsuits	\$242,898	\$167,667 (69%) from Loren Parks \$17,500 (7%) from Freedomworks \$16,350 (7%) from Oregon Tort Reform Coalition/OR Litigation Fairness Project \$10,000 (4%) Columbia Helicopters \$7,500 (3%) Glenn Pelikan \$7,362 (3%) from Kevin L. Mannix PC \$16,518 (7%) other donations
	<i>Michael Reeder, Glenn Pelikan, Russell R. Walker</i>		
78	Amends Constitution: Restricts legislative use of emergency clause	\$182,730	\$150,000 (82%) from Hire Calling Public Affairs \$12,230 (7%) from IP 51 PAC \$12,230 (7%) from IP 53 PAC \$8,270 (4.5%) from Hold Criminals Accountable PAC
	<i>Bill Sizemore, Lawrence George</i>		
109	Statutory: Open primary	\$414,788	\$60,000 (14.5%) from Brett Wilcox \$15,000 each (4% each) from Regence Group/Blue Cross Blue Shield and Andrew Ferguson \$14,500 (3.5%) from Knute Buehler \$12,500 (3%) from John Gray \$11,500 (3%) from Committee for Unified Party Inc \$10,000 each (2% each) Richard Alexander, Associated Oregon Industries, William Campbell, Jeannine Cowles, Platt Electric Supply, Standard Insurance Co., William Swindells, and Willamette Dental Management Group \$19,500 (5%) Contributions ≤\$100 \$186,788 (45%) other contributions
	<i>Phil Keisling</i>		

“Unfortunately, checkbook democracy is an all too apt description of Oregon’s signature gathering process in 2008,” said Thompson. “The populist originators of the initiative process are probably rolling over in their graves at this level of big donor domination.”

Democracy Reform Oregon (DRO) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit group working to increase accountability and opportunities for participation in politics and governmental decision-making. DRO has been working on democracy reform issues since 1999 and was formerly the Money in Politics Research Action Project.

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