

From the Desk of Dennis Richardson

November 12th, 2015

President Peter Courtney
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97302

Dear Senator Courtney,

By now, I hope you've had a chance to review the recent and concerning review by the Center for Public Integrity detailing where Oregon ranks with regard to campaign finance, public records accessibility, and overall transparency and accountability. I hope you can agree that an "F" grade is a black eye for Oregon. It's time to do something to change Oregon's course. I am writing to encourage you and Speaker Kotek to prioritize ethics and public records reform in the 2016 session.

As your colleague for twelve years, we've been through a round of ethics reform previously. In the wake of the Kitzhaber scandal, it's time for the legislature to do so again. I can also point to numerous legislative and special sessions where we've done bi-partisan, heavy-lifting policy work to address the challenges facing our state. There is still time to do something to rebuild the trust of Oregonians who are counting on you to help put Oregon back on track. We should be leading the nation, not trailing the rest of the country. Our democratic process relies on an open government, and the ability of citizens and a free press to access records. A transparent government where the people know what their elected officials are doing is a fundamental right.

In the 2016 session, I am requesting, at a minimum, the following legislative policies be addressed:

- Public records reform that ends the practice of stonewalling citizens and the media with time delays and outrageous fees for records, which belong to the people;
- Allow a public vote on the process of impeachment. Oregon is the only state in the nation whose legislature has not been vested with such authority;
- Allow all political parties to have, if they choose, a taxpayer-funded primary election. In a democratic society, we should not prioritize any one political party over another;
- End the practice of allowing millions of dollars in campaign contributions and expenditures to be reported as "miscellaneous" in Orestar's campaign finance reporting database; and
- Ensure that all candidates for elected office are required to be truthful in their voters' pamphlet statement. Currently, truthfulness is only required in the heading of the voter's pamphlet statement.

Senator Courtney, for years I have discussed the need for greater ethics, campaign finance, and public records reforms with thousands of Oregonians via my newsletter, in personal conversations, and across social media sites. In 2007, then Speaker Hunt placed me on the House Ethics Reform Committee, where I assisted in drafting and implementing House ethics rules revisions. Now, hundreds have signed a petition imploring the legislature to enact reforms in 2016. The people of Oregon are looking to you for leadership in implementing these reforms.

If you have any questions about legislative policies that Oregonians are telling me they support, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Dennis Richardson
Former State Representative, 2003-2015