

“Oregon’s direct primary law, initiative, referendum and recall have been refined in the fires of opposition and have stood the test. During my term of office I will zealously guard these laws and combat with every means in my power any attempt to infringe, subvert, or wrest them from the people.”

- Julius Meier, Independent Governor of Oregon (1931)

Ben Westlund wants Oregon’s initiative system to reflect the true efforts of Oregonians, and be free from out-of-state control and national special-interest shenanigans.

The Problem

Oregon’s revolutionary initiative system has made Oregon politics an attractive target for out-of-state interests. Oregon’s ballot is reflecting less and less what Oregonians have supported with their time and effort, and more and more what national PACs have thrust upon the state through high-dollar contributions.

Out-of-state special interests and big money have targeted Oregon as a place to push extreme policy because of Oregon’s open election laws.

The Solution

While still looking to other states for constructive policy cooperation, Oregon must jealously guard her initiative process from those who seek to make Oregon into the nation’s political battleground.

While it is impractical to close Oregon’s political borders completely, reforms of the initiative system should come with these objectives in mind:

- Ensure that Oregon signature gatherers adhere to existing law
- Keep out-of-state signature gatherers accountable to Oregon’s laws
- Keep out-of-state money and influence in the petition process to a minimum
- Protect the intentions of the citizens who legitimately sign a petition
- Above all: **Encourage grassroots, citizen-based activism over special-interest campaigns**

The Plan

As Governor, Ben will ensure in-state compliance by:

- Enforcing mandatory penalties for those who knowingly break gathering laws
- Make initiative sponsors and treasurers personally and financially responsible for known breaches of election law (such as candidates and treasurers are personally responsible for C&E fraud).

Ben will ensure that out-of-state interests adhere to Oregon’s laws by:

- Working with other states to create a reciprocal system of election laws whereby a violation of one is punishable under another state’s Fair Business Practices
- Mandating that any company involved in Oregon’s initiative qualification process has at least one Oregonian as a primary officer
- Requiring that petition circulators be Oregon residents (currently, there is no requirement to be a circulator)