

POLITICS

Campaign finance reports: 2.5% of Carrick Flynn's donors live in Oregon

**Connor Radnovich**

Salem Statesman Journal

Published 6:36 p.m. PT April 15, 2022 | Updated 9:00 p.m. PT April 15, 2022

Of the \$817,254 in itemized individual contributions to the campaign of Carrick Flynn, candidate for Oregon's Sixth Congressional District, only 2.5% were from Oregon-based donors, according to recently published federal campaign finance data.

Most of his itemized contributions came from California and New York, representing 43.1% and 12.6% of his total, respectively.

In total, 10 Oregonians were listed as donors to his campaign during the first quarter of 2022. Only donors who contribute more than \$200 to a campaign are required by the federal government to be identified. Flynn also reported \$12,931 in unitemized contributions from unidentified donors who gave less than \$200.

According to Flynn's campaign, when including those small-money donors, about 88 Oregonians contributed through March 31.

Rep. Andrea Salinas' campaign reported she has raised more than \$520,000 and that nearly 80% was from Oregon donors. Dr. Kathleen Harder's campaign reported she has raised more than \$430,000, with 81% from donors within Oregon. Neither campaign noted how much might have been from small-money donors.

Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon has raised \$47,300 in itemized individual contributions, with more than 90% coming from Oregon donors, according to campaign finance filings. She reported an additional \$19,600 in unitemized contributions.

Former Multnomah County Commission Loretta Smith has raised \$237,000 and reported about 74% of it came from within Oregon. She also loaned her campaign \$60,000.

Intel engineer Matt West loaned his campaign \$400,000, but also raised \$317,106 from other individuals and has so far personally contributed nearly \$50,000.

Cryptocurrency investor Cody Reynolds is largely self-funding his campaign, including a \$2 million personal loan. He also contributed more than \$500,000 to the campaign. He has raised \$4,725 from other individuals.

Opponents criticize Flynn

Flynn's opponents noted their pride in having the majority of their support come from within Oregon, while criticizing Flynn for his lack thereof.

They held an unusual mid-campaign joint news conference earlier this week to criticize House Majority PAC for picking favorites within the party by purchasing nearly \$1 million in television advertising timeslots in support of Flynn. As of Friday, \$488,000 has been reported in campaign finance filings.

House Majority PAC was launched in 2011 with the goal of winning back Democratic control of the U.S. House and to counter conservative super PAC spending. Top Democratic operatives steer the political action committee and wealthy left-leaning donors are known to contribute to the fund.

Flynn's opponents have also criticized other political action committee spending on behalf of Flynn. Protect Our Future PAC, led by cryptocurrency billionaire Sam Bankman-Fried and based in Arizona, has spent nearly \$5 million so far. Washington, D.C.-based Justice Unites Us PAC, newly formed in March, spent nearly \$850,000 on canvassing for Flynn's campaign.

"Carrick Flynn is a phantom candidate and no one in Oregon knows him," Harder said in a statement. "He needs to tell us why a crypto-billionaire and out-of-state donors are pouring millions into his campaign."

"As I'm out in the community, I'm hearing Oregon voters asking for whom Mr. Flynn is running — his out-of-state crypto billionaire backer and his family or Oregon families?" Salinas said in a statement.

"If you're going to run for Congress in Oregon, you should probably know more than 12 Oregonians," said Robin Logsdon, campaign manager for West's campaign. "Matt has hundreds of Oregonian donors, but then unlike Carrick, Matt's running to fight for working people, not the San Francisco and D.C. elite."

"While he may be bankrolled by D.C. elites and crypto billionaires ... who are now swooping in to try and buy the election, our campaign is proud that 73.8% of our donors are from Oregon," Smith's campaign said in a statement.

'Wide open to accusations'

Oregon political analyst Jim Moore said Flynn's extraordinary out-of-state support and lack of in-state contributions is unusual when compared to other congressional races in the state's history. He said that while it makes sense Flynn would get nationwide campaign contributions considering his background working with national groups, it does expose him to political attacks.

"That leaves him wide open to accusations of trying to buy the seat for his own purposes, not for the purposes of the people of the district," Moore said. "He can defend against those charges, but it is more difficult for him to do so with such a huge proportion of his support from elsewhere."

Flynn's campaign manager Avital Balwit defended their fundraising.

"We are proud of the response from voters — and grassroots donors — from all walks of life here in the 6th District," Balwit said. "We're continuing to build momentum and support, and know that Carrick's core platform of equitable economic recovery, pandemic preparedness and strong, resilient communities is setting us apart in a crowded primary."

Friday was the deadline for congressional candidates nationwide to report campaign contributions and expenses from the beginning of the year through March 31. The postings paint a clearer picture of which candidates have the funds to power their campaigns through to election day, and where those funds are coming from.

Oregon's primary election day is May 17.

The \$830,351 Flynn raised — \$817,254 of it itemized — was the most of any candidate in the race. Only Reynolds has more cash contributions overall thanks to the money he has loaned to and spent on his own campaign.

Campaign fundraisers with public event pages on Facebook help illuminate some details about Flynn's out-of-state fundraising efforts.

Flynn wrote on the event page of a March 19 fundraiser at a luxury apartment high-rise in downtown Oakland, California, that he would be unable to travel due to him and his wife

contracting COVID-19. Instead, he said, he would attend remotely, where he would talk briefly and answer questions. He also offered to have one-on-one calls with whomever was interested.

He added that "the rest of the team" would be in attendance and that they would serve vegan Chinese food.

The event was hosted by a lawyer and policy researcher who described Flynn as a mentor and is affiliated with the Centre for the Governance of AI, which Flynn co-founded. Twenty-nine people responded to the event as interested or attending.

A second fundraiser was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 3. The description of the event states Flynn would be in attendance, though it is unclear if he went.

The host was a former colleague of Flynn's when he worked at Georgetown University.

Forty-eight people responded on Facebook as either attending or interested. Any campaign contributions that occurred at or after this event would not be included in campaign finance data released Friday.

Reporter Connor Radnovich covers the Oregon Legislature and state government. Contact him at cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com or 503-508-6131, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich.