

Confidential To the Board of the Oregon Center for Public Policy:

Women in Oregon and around the country have been speaking out recently about the inappropriate conduct, gendered dynamics, and particular challenges that women face in the workplace, often exacerbated by other identifying factors like race, age, (dis)ability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Many men have supported women as they bravely share their experiences. The national conversation has finally started to shift toward holding those responsible for such behavior accountable for their actions.

Your decision to hire Jefferson Smith as your new Executive Director sends a damaging and destructive message to women in Oregon. Mr. Smith's conduct toward women is well documented in the press, and well known in the progressive community. His pattern of behavior includes a physical assault on a woman, an incident that came to light during Mr. Smith's run for Mayor of Portland in 2012. In response to the publicity of that story Mr. Smith showed up unannounced at his victim's home which caused her to feel at risk.

This is very concerning behavior for someone who is to lead an organization that is currently relied upon by many in Oregon. Hiring a man with such a clear and publicly known history to lead a progressive organization signals to the women of our movement that they do not matter. That a person who displays such behavior can continue to be elevated into positions of power says to every young woman and man getting involved that this behavior is not only acceptable, but effective.

We believe many women have their own stories and experiences from interactions with Mr. Smith. We worry that additional incidents have occurred, but the victims have been silenced by his position of power. Should additional victims exist, our concern is that they would be further victimized by rewarding him with a new title and opportunity.

Many of us have our own experiences with Mr. Smith, while others of us stand in solidarity with them and those not named here as allies. We believe Mr. Smith diminishes the value and role of women as a matter of practice.

As leaders and contributors in progressive politics in Oregon, we felt that we could not remain silent and allow you to perpetuate the narrative that women in progressive politics and the issues they face in the workplace are secondary.

We disavow the message you are sending. Women are integral leaders of Oregon's progressive movement and deserve the utmost professional respect. We stand united as a progressive movement, which today means standing up and holding each other accountable.

Sincerely,

Beth Bernard

Emma Brennan

Louis DeSitter

Jess Giannettino-Villatoro

Amy Hojnowski

Jen Lleras

Reyna Lopez

Jared Mason-Gere

Liz McCann

Eva Rippeteau

Mara Romero

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Jenny Smith

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