



**Verbal Testimony of Jason Snead**  
**Executive Director, Honest Elections Project Action**  
**House Bill 393—Proponent**  
**Utah House Government Operations Committee**  
**February 13, 2025**

Chairman Burton, members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 393.

My name is Jason Snead, executive director of Honest Elections Project Action, a nonprofit group fighting for the right of every American to vote in free and fair elections.

House Bill 393 is a straightforward measure to ban foreign funding in state ballot measure campaigns. This is no hypothetical concern. Across the country, tens of millions of dollars in foreign-tied funds are being spent to influence the outcome of state ballot measures and legislatively referred constitutional amendments.

Decisions as significant as amending the constitution belong exclusively in the hands of the citizens of this country and the voters of this state. Foreign nationals have no business influencing ballot measures, and these campaigns should not be allowed to serve as a Trojan Horse for foreign interference in the American democratic process.

Yet, as we speak, one of the largest funders of ballot measure campaigns nationwide, a group called the Sixteen Thirty Fund, has taken \$243 million from a Swiss billionaire named Hansjorg Wyss while spending \$130 million to influence the outcome of initiatives and legislatively referred measures in 25 states.

And remember: While we have zeroed in on spending tied to Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss, nothing is stopping hostile foreign powers like China or Russia from doing the same. Recent reporting has revealed that money tied to China is flowing into U.S. environmental nonprofits, a pattern of giving very similar to Wyss's own giving to left-wing political groups like the Sixteen Thirty Fund.

It is time to close the foreign funding loophole and I encourage you to pass HB 393 to do just that. Other states have witnessed the danger of delay. Last year, Ohio passed a law banning foreign funding for ballot measures, but not before the Sixteen Thirty Fund poured more than \$20 million into the state. Prior to 2023, the Sixteen Thirty Fund had spent very little. Then, suddenly, the money flooded in.

There are a few things any ban on foreign funding must do to be effective.

First, states must ban both direct *and indirect* foreign contributions to these campaigns. Further, a ban should be designed to prevent groups from laundering large sums of foreign money into campaigns by accepting and using foreign donations for other purposes that free up resources for



ballot measure contributions. A clear way to accomplish this is to require donors to certify they have not received more than a specified amount of foreign funding over a time period prior to the contribution (such as \$100,000 over a four-year period).

Second, these same protections should be applied to independent expenditures, to avoid creating a loophole.

Third, the ban must apply to foreign nationals. It is not enough to target foreign governments or political parties alone. Foreign meddling is toxic no matter whether it originates from the Chinese government or from a foreign activist like Hansjorg Wyss.

Finally, it is important to note that banning foreign influence over constitutional amendments and related ballot questions in no way implicates the privacy rights of American donors. Cutting foreign influence out of the ballot measure process is not, and should never be, an excuse to limit the free speech rights of American citizens.

HB 393 would make great strides towards safeguarding the integrity of Utah's elections against foreign influence. You have already heard about Ohio's successful efforts last year, and numerous states are currently considering similar legislation.

I applaud the members of this body for leading the way on this important issue and am happy to take any questions you may have.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.