



**Verbal Testimony of Jason Snead
Executive Director, Honest Elections Project Action
House Bill 818—Proponent
Montana Senate Judiciary Committee
April 8, 2025**

Chairman Usher, Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 818.

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 818 is a straightforward measure to ban foreign funding in state ballot measure campaigns. This is no hypothetical concern. As you have already heard, a group called the Sixteen Thirty Fund has poured \$130 million in funds tied to foreign billionaire Hansjorg Wyss into ballot measure campaigns—including \$3.3 million right here in Montana.

Decisions as significant as amending the constitution belong exclusively in the hands of the citizens of this country and the voters of this state. It is time to close the loophole in Montana law that has allowed this process to become a Trojan Horse for foreign influence.

To do that, first, you must ban both direct *and indirect* foreign contributions to these campaigns. You may wish to go further and ensure groups cannot launder foreign funds into campaigns by accepting and using foreign donations for other purposes that free up funds from American sources for ballot measure contributions. One way to do this would be to cap the amount of foreign funding an organization can accept and still contribute to ballot measures.

Second, these same protections should be applied to independent expenditures.

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 818 would make great strides towards safeguarding the integrity of Montana's elections against foreign influence. I encourage you to advance this measure.