

# Oregon Democrats, records show

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Yet Oregon elections officials in the Secretary of State's Office who investigated the huge contribution, which Democrats misreported as coming from a payment processor, did not mention the Wyden campaign's involvement in a settlement with the party last month.

State officials stipulated in the settlement that the fundraiser who landed the big donation, Diana Rogalle, was operating under a contract with the Democratic Party of Oregon, based solely on the party's assertion. The Secretary of State's Office did not mention Rogalle's connection to Wyden despite obtaining email exchanges in which a political strategist for cryptocurrency firm FTX, Susan McCue, referred to Rogalle as "all things Wyden." The senator's campaign manager and campaign compliance director were also copied on emailed discussions of how FTX Director of Engineering Nishad Singh should wire the \$500,000 to Oregon Democrats.

The party announced Friday that it will return the donation, which it spent during the November general election at least in part to elect Gov. Tina Kotek. It only has the money to return the \$500,000 now because Wyden, along with Sen. Jeff Merkley, U.S. Reps. Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici and Val Hoyle and Kotek, have agreed to transfer funds from their campaign accounts to the party to cover the cost.

Federal campaign finance records show that Wyden's campaign paid Rogalle's Washington, D.C.-based company, The Ashmead Group, between \$6,500 and \$23,000 for fundraising consulting every month in 2022, with the exception of October. The Democratic Party of Oregon paid Rogalle just once: \$1,000 in November, well after she secured the contribution Singh made on Oct. 4.

That payment and the Democratic Party of Oregon's assertion to state elections investigators that it contracted with The Ashmead Group are the only publicly available evidence that the party hired Rogalle last fall.

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Paid for by Democratic Party of Oregon (353). The top contributors are: Friends of Tina Kotek (4792), Future PAC, House Builders (1524), Prime Trust LLC, SDLF (1471), Protect Our Future PAC.

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# Christine Drazan wants you to believe she shares your values.

## The truth? She doesn't

**Check the facts:** 1. HuffPost, 10/6/22. 2. Oregon Family Council Voter's Guide, 5/17/22. 3. Oregon State Legislature, HB 3423, 2019 Session. 4. OregonLive, Your Government, HB 2013, 4/23/19.

Christine Drazan  
the truth and  
decide for



The Democratic Party of Oregon spent at least some of the \$500,000 donation it received from FTX executive Nishad Singh to send mailers attacking Republican candidate for governor Christine Drazan last year, although the party misidentified payment processor Prime Trust as the donor. The fundraiser who coordinated the donation has a long history of working for U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden's campaign.

By [Hillary Borrud](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

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Wyden and the Democratic Party of Oregon do operate a joint federal political action committee called the Oregon Victory Fund, and it paid Rogalle \$2,500 in October, according to the FEC. But neither Democratic Party of Oregon officials nor Wyden spokespeople have pointed to that payment as one made to Rogalle to secure the Singh donation.

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 2 min read

The Secretary of State's Office and the Democratic Party of Oregon both refused to answer a question from The Oregonian/OregonLive on May 19 regarding when exactly Rogalle solicited the donation from Singh. The party also declined to offer any comment for this story. Rogalle did not respond to an inquiry from The Oregonian/OregonLive last week regarding when she signed a contract with the Democratic Party of Oregon.

Hank Stern, a spokesperson for Wyden, was unequivocal in an email last week saying that the senator's campaign had zero involvement in securing the big donation from the now-disgraced cryptocurrency executive. "The Wyden campaign played no role in this donation to the (Democratic Party of Oregon)," he wrote in an email. "The money was raised for the (Democratic Party of Oregon) by a fundraiser it retained to raise national money."

Stern did not respond to repeated requests for evidence that Rogalle's solicitation of the donation from Singh was distinct from her fundraising work for Wyden.

Rogalle has worked with Wyden's campaign since at least 2009.

Ben Morris, a spokesperson for the Secretary of State's Office, defended the agency's handling of the Democratic Party of Oregon case, including its legal filing calling Rogalle "a fundraiser working under contract with DPO." Morris told The Oregonian/OregonLive that the Secretary of State's Office based the assertion on a statement by the Democratic Party of Oregon, which the state did not independently verify.

"Investigations into a donation focus on the donor and the recipient," Morris wrote in an email. "Other groups involved in soliciting a donation are not within the scope of these investigations because committees are required to report accurate information regardless of how they obtain their contributions."





U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, pictured in April at an event to discuss semiconductors, was not involved in securing a \$500,000 donation from an FTX executive for Oregon Democrats, a spokesperson said. Sean Meagher/The Oregonian

It would be natural for a cryptocurrency executive to want to curry political favor with Wyden, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee, one committee that regulates the industry. In 2021, Wyden was the central figure in a Politico [story](#) on the cryptocurrency industry's new lobbying power. That news story portrayed Wyden as a powerful ally of tech innovators generally and crypto forces in particular.

It is perfectly legal, in the wake of a 2014 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, for a U.S. senator to solicit unlimited donations to fuel a get-out-the vote campaign for his home state party, said Kate Titus, executive director of the good government group Common Cause Oregon.

However, under Oregon law it is a Class C felony to make or accept a campaign contribution under a "false name."

Rogalle was informed in advance about the Democratic Party of Oregon's decision to report Singh's contribution as coming from a Las Vegas payment processor instead of Singh, at Singh's "not strong" request, according to emails obtained by the Secretary of State's Office.

According to the records, Singh's contribution was earmarked for Democrats' general election "coordinated campaign" get-out-the-vote effort. When Rogalle urgently needed information on Oct. 3 so that Singh could wire the \$500,000 to Oregon Democrats, she included Wyden's Campaign Manager Tim Leahy and campaign Compliance Officer Jocelyn Tyree, along with Democratic Party of Oregon Compliance Director Amelia Manlove.

Stern also wrote in an email last week that Rogalle "kept the members of the campaign team responsible for working with the coordinated campaign in the loop."

On May 11, the Secretary of State's Office closed its investigation of the Democratic Party for incorrectly identifying cryptocurrency payment processor Prime Trust as the donor and, as part of a settlement, did not pursue criminal charges against any party officials involved. That deal also slashed the penalty on the party from \$35,000 to \$15,000. The Secretary of State's Office referred its investigation of Singh to the Oregon Department of Justice to consider whether to open a criminal investigation.

It is common for state-level political parties to run coordinated campaigns that strategically combine fundraising by federal and state candidates and target the money they collectively raise to critical get-out-the-vote activities, three sources with knowledge of Oregon Democrats' coordinated campaigns told The Oregonian/OregonLive. Politicians with the greatest ability to raise money are typically expected to kick in the most. The practice allows candidates in tighter races, such as a gubernatorial candidate, to benefit from the fundraising abilities of other candidates, especially an incumbent such as Wyden, who holds a powerful Senate committee leadership position and was widely expected to win reelection in 2022.

The people familiar with Democrats' coordinated campaign efforts, who requested anonymity in order to freely discuss party practices, said that with the exception of the party's coordinated campaign director Aisling Coghlan, it is not Democratic Party of Oregon employees but rather-experienced campaign staffers associated with politicians in higher offices who direct fundraising and get-out-the-vote strategies for Democrats' coordinated campaigns.

Titus of Common Cause Oregon, said "it's perfectly legal" for candidates and political parties to raise huge sums through their federal political action committees, since a 2014 U.S. Supreme Court ruling known as *McCutcheon v. FEC* struck down limits on how much an individual could contribute to federal committees during a two-year period.

“Nevertheless, this is a clear example of how the current campaign finance system is failing,” Titus wrote in an email. “It’s absurd that candidates can now solicit half-million-dollar contributions – and that’s not illegal!”

Titus noted that federal law limits the amount that a senator can raise directly for their own campaign to a few thousand dollars per donor “and only from individuals. But since the Supreme Court’s *McKutcheon* decision, they can raise huge amounts, even from LLCs, for coordinated campaigns,” Titus said. “And that money can then be funneled back to their own campaign, or minimally, they get credit for raising it. So either way, the candidate directly benefits from the donation.”

Jeff Eager, a Bend lawyer and political consultant who has worked with Republican candidates, has been closely tracking developments around Singh’s donation to the Democratic Party of Oregon via his Substack account [Oregon Roundup](#). He noted that Wyden already had a connection with the cryptocurrency industry.

“Singh’s political advisor described the fundraiser as ‘all things Ron Wyden’ in the email introducing the fundraiser to an advisor of Singh’s then-employer, FTX,” Eager told The Oregonian/OregonLive by email on Wednesday. “This was no coincidence. Wyden was then chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over crypto firms like FTX ... It is hard to imagine that Singh, or anyone else at FTX, would drop half a million dollars into Oregon state races without knowing Wyden wanted them to.”

Eager noted that the Democratic Party of Oregon reported its \$1,000 November payment to Rogalle’s company, The Ashmead Group, as an administrative cost split between the party’s state and federal political action committees.

At least some of the money from Singh, misidentified as coming from Prime Trust, was used to pay for ads against Republican gubernatorial candidate Christine Drazan, to help Kotek, according to the disclaimer on the ad mailed to voters.

The alleged wrongdoing and fraud by Sam Bankman-Fried and his FTX associates, including Singh, did not come to light until days after the Nov. 8 election. On Nov. 11, FTX filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and Bankman-Fried resigned. Singh, who was criminally charged in December, pleaded guilty to six charges of criminal fraud on [Feb. 28](#), including one count of conspiracy to violate federal campaign finance laws, and agreed to cooperate with the federal investigation into Bankman-Fried. As part of his testimony related to the criminal case against Bankman-Fried, Singh admitted to making political donations to federal campaign committees with FTX customers’ money.

Rebecca Tweed, a political strategist in Oregon who has worked with a number of Republican candidates, said it was surprising that Democrats in the loop on the transaction, including the sophisticated staffers on a senatorial campaign, did not identify concerns about a big donation from the cryptocurrency executive.

“What’s incredible to me about this situation is that Sen. Wyden’s campaign team did not do their research to ensure they were not facilitating donations from a shady company — it is ‘campaign fundraising 101’ to know background information about donors, vet them, and make sure if they are legitimate, especially at a \$500,000 level,” Tweed wrote in an email. “While facilitating donations is not illegal or uncommon, the multiple layers of conflicts of interest in this situation ... should have raised alarms among the campaign’s fundraising team long before any donation ever occurred.”

There have been few details released about how the Democratic Party of Oregon snagged the donation, its largest on record, despite the Secretary of State’s six-month investigation into the transaction. The agency’s May 11 settlement with the Democratic Party of Oregon stated only that an unnamed “fundraiser working under contract with the (Democratic Party of Oregon)” discussed a potential contribution to the party with Singh or his representatives sometime before Oct. 4, when the money showed up as expected in the Democratic Party of Oregon’s bank account.

Officials at the Secretary of State’s Office have refused to provide a copy of their closed investigation file on the Democratic Party of Oregon. Email exchanges between the FTX political strategist McCue, fundraiser Rogalle, Wyden’s campaign staffers and Democratic party officials were part of a case file at a state administrative hearings office that was set to decide on the Secretary of State’s proposed penalty for the Democrats misidentifying their big donor prior to the settlement. That file was released at the request of Eager, the Bend lawyer and political consultant.

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