

Recently, a local group that calls themselves the Ogden Ethics Project sent a checklist to each candidate running for Ogden City Mayor and City Council and asked them to voluntarily limit their campaign fundraising efforts. Although most of the ideas on the list were reasonable and basically included in current fundraising laws, there was one idea that is nothing more than anti-business sentiment and suggests it is somehow unethical to receive campaign donations from business entities, unions or other organizations.

The assertion that businesses giving campaign donation is unethical is completely ridiculous! I dislike the premise that somehow businesses are a problem in local campaigns. They are not. I dislike very much the premise that money freely given by a business to a campaign, because they support the business friendly ideas of a specific candidate, is somehow unethical. Suggesting that it is unethical to receive a campaign donation from a business entity is in itself an anti-business sentiment that insinuates that businesses cannot be trusted and that we would all be better off if they were not involved. This thinking is flawed.

In fact, this type of thinking is at the core of Ogden's past economic difficulty...of not being able to attract business to our community. This sort of mentality, that business is somehow the problem, and that we have to keep our eye on them or they will take us for all they can...is the problem.

Businesses are the life blood of any healthy and vibrant community. Businesses bring jobs, which sustain our population. Businesses bring activity and interest into our community. Businesses balance our service and tax levels with the taxes they pay, invest in the arts and entertainment and invest in our neighborhoods and schools. We must be actively creating an atmosphere in Ogden where businesses can thrive, make money and be successful. This mentality will fuel prosperity for our city as we move into the future.

Although it may be true that there are those that would use their monetary influence to fund the entire campaign of a candidate, this applies to both businesses and individuals. So, by choosing to say that we can get rid of unethical behavior by prohibiting business from participating in the local election process is like throwing the baby out with the bath water, which in my opinion, completely disenfranchises businesses and takes away any voice that they may have in our election process.

A more realistic solution to the problem is to place a cap on allowable donations from any entity or individual and then allow all contributors to work within those boundaries. In fact, last year the Ogden City Council, looking at this very idea, voted to set a maximum campaign donation amount for both the Mayoral and City Council races. Therefore, current campaign finance ordinances eliminate the concern that any business or individual might single handedly fund the campaign of a candidate.

So, do we disenfranchise businesses completely by implying they are the problem and that all political donations made by business are unethical or do we encourage them to participate and send a clear signal through their donations which ideas support their needs in growing business and bring community success? I think the choice for Ogden is obvious.