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Letters to the Editor

<http://bangordailynews.com/2011/06/09/opinion/friday-june-10-2011-for-a-song-stick-to-the-union-electricity-sources/>

Contempt for public

It has been a bad week for democracy in Maine.

The Legislature has launched a frontal assault on our election process, creating new obstacles to voting while practically inviting wealthy special interests to buy our elections. Recent bills would end Maine's tradition of Election Day registration and deny the vote to anyone who can't produce the right kind of identification card.

Those changes are bad enough, but at least the Legislature followed its own rules. In contrast, they are gutting another law without a public hearing and in violation of longstanding precedents.

This provision is the limit on the money that gubernatorial candidates may accept from wealthy contributors. In 1996 a voter-approved initiative established a limit of \$500. This amount has been increased slightly, but it generally has worked well and was obviously no obstacle for our current governor.

Now a majority of legislators has voted to set the amount at \$1,500 — multiplying the influence of wealthy special interests on our elections.

As a former legislator I believe such contempt for the public is never pretty. It is especially ugly where it involves the rules our elected leaders must follow when raising money to benefit their own campaigns. And it is downright shameful to undo a citizen initiative without even bothering to hold a public hearing.

Our democratic system is intended to ensure that our elected officials honor and respect the will of the public. This legislation shows little honor and respect for the people the Legislature is supposed to serve.

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