



For Immediate Release

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Press Release

Clean Election Advocates Support “Requalifying” Proposal as Alternative to Matching Funds

Supporters urge timely adjustments that place voters, not big donors, first and allow hard working candidates in competitive races to have appropriate resources to run campaigns.

The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs will accept public comment this morning on proposed changes to the Maine Clean Election Act. The changes are necessary because of a court decision that overturned the matching funds system, a provision in the law that provided additional funding to candidates with high-spending opponents or targeted independent expenditures.

“Once again, Maine people are leading the way with innovation and commitment,” said Alison Smith, President of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “The court’s ruling eliminated one part of our Clean Election system, but affirmed the fundamental constitutionality of the program as a whole. With the right adjustments now, the system will be stronger than ever.”

In its report to the VLA Committee, the Ethics Commission made two recommendations. MCCE supports Legislative Proposal #2, the “requalifying option,” which would allow participating candidates to receive supplemental funding after they successfully complete one or two additional rounds of collecting Qualifying Contributions – the \$5 donations that local voters make to help a candidate qualify for public funding.

The alternative is a one-size-fits-all proposal that would not allow for any supplemental funds for individual candidates. MCCE feels that this option would not be viable for the many candidates who find themselves in very hotly contested races, often facing large independent expenditure campaigns.

“Allowing candidates to ‘right size’ their campaign makes good sense,” said Ann Luther, Chair of MCCE’s Public Policy Committee. “Receiving supplemental funds would require two things: a hard-working candidate, and a growing and active base of in-district supporters. This responds to the Court ruling, and it is consistent with the intent of Clean Elections.”

Andrew Bossie, MCCE’s Executive Director, says Maine voters want a timely fix ahead of the 2012 legislative campaign. “Maine people want to keep the influence of big money out of our government. They want a government accountable to voters, not lobbyists and corporations that write fat checks every time an election comes around.” Bossie says candidates for state legislature are already lining up, and changes need

to be made early next year to keep Clean Elections an attractive option. In recent polls, nearly 80% of Maine people said they support clean elections.

Legislative Proposal #2 is a one-of-a-kind proposal, continuing the first-in-the-nation trend of the law, which was passed by Citizen Initiative in 1996. Pam Cahill, who represents MCCE in the Maine Legislature and serves on MCCE's Board, testified for MCCE at the hearing. She said, "The work that has gone into this process is a testament to good old Yankee ingenuity. Maine people – Republicans, Democrats and unenrolled – came together to come up with a home-grown solution that is right for Maine. We urge the committee to base their legislation on the 'requalifying option.'"

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