



MONEY IN POLITICS PROJECT

REPORT #17

Clean Elections
Participation
Rates and
Outcomes





MONEY IN POLITICS PROJECT

The Money in Politics Project is a program of **Maine Citizens for Clean Elections**, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization working to ensure that Maine's campaign finance laws, elections, and government serve the public interest, both in principle and in practice. We engage Maine people from across the political spectrum, using research, education, and outreach to further fairness, inclusion, and opportunity in our politics.

MCCE is a 501(c)(3) organization.

www.MaineCleanElections.org

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Clean Election Participation Rates and Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Maine Clean Election Act marked a major milestone: twenty years successfully providing over 2500 general election candidates a way to campaign without raising private contributions. Maine was the first state in the nation to offer full public funding to qualified legislative and gubernatorial candidates who agree to limit their spending.

The core principle of the MCEA has remained firm since voters first approved the law in 1996: candidates who are willing to forgo special interest contributions and can show support in their communities are eligible for a limited amount of public funding. The program allows candidates to compete for office even if they object to the fundraising imperative or lack wealthy friends and contacts who could fuel their efforts. Many candidates have stepped forward and served distinguished careers even though before MCEA they never considered running for office. The innovative program also encourages issue-based campaigns maximizing direct contact between voters and candidates.

Although the core of the Act has remained unchanged, some of its features have evolved to meet the changing landscape. The original Act allowed participating candidates to receive “matching funds” when they were outspent by opponents or by independent spenders. Courts initially upheld the matching funds system in 1999, but

changing winds in the judiciary resulted in a 2011 ruling eliminating this provision.

In 2015 Maine citizens took to the voting booth to defend the law they had created, approving a replacement “supplemental funding” system — the first of its kind in the country. The successful 2015 citizen initiative — designed by Mainers, for Mainers — reaffirmed Maine voters’ commitment to publicly funded elections and reversed a temporary decline in candidate participation in the program.

The revised program has now worked well through three legislative election cycles (2016 through 2020) and one gubernatorial cycle (2018). Participation rates fluctuate but generally remain strong, and a new political culture has emerged in which Clean Election funding is a way of life. An entire generation of candidates and elected leaders has passed through Augusta knowing that there is a better way to fund campaigns than dialing for dollars. And the public has reaped the benefits of a more responsive, inclusive democracy.

MCCE believes it is important to continue to tell the unfolding story of Clean Elections and the movement to retain and strengthen public control of our democracy. It is the story of individuals who run for office for the first time, and of citizen-voters who are reconnected to their government by a simple request for a \$5 qualifying contribution. Part of the story can also be told through data. For this report MCCE collected and analyzed publicly available data including information about which candidates participated in the Clean Elections public funding option, how they fared in the general

elections in 2018 and 2020, success rates of Clean Elections candidates against privately funded candidates, and participation and success rates by gender. This data paints a full picture of the success of the program, and allows us to examine trends that shed light on the program’s strengths and point to opportunities to enhance its provisions.

This report is part of MCCE’s ongoing efforts to analyze the Clean Elections program and educate the public about significant campaign finance issues in Maine. Along with our partner, the League of Women Voters of Maine, MCCE will continue to report on related topics such as the role of corporate contributions in Maine elections, giving patterns by major industries with interests before the state legislature, the influence of independent expenditures, voter participation, and the health of our democracy in general.

The 2022–2023 biennial budget proposed by Governor Mills and enacted by the legislature includes continued full funding for the Maine Clean Election Act. This is a good investment in our democracy, and we will be following the budget process this year to ensure that Clean Elections remains a priority, as the voters have twice demanded. Even in times of a tight budget, our democracy remains a sound investment of public dollars. MCCE seeks to ensure that the benefits of publicly funded elections continue to accrue for Mainers and the elected officials we trust to represent our best interests throughout this legislative cycle and long into the future.



Highlights

This report covers the 2018 and 2020 legislative races in Maine, focusing on the general elections. We highlight trends that have emerged since we last reported on MCEA participation following the 2016 election cycle. MCCE has analyzed a wide range of metrics regarding races for the 186 seats in the legislature to shed light on Clean Election participation, success rates, and demographic trends. The data shows some interesting highlights pointing toward the continued success of Clean Elections, but also hinting at some possible trends which only time will confirm:

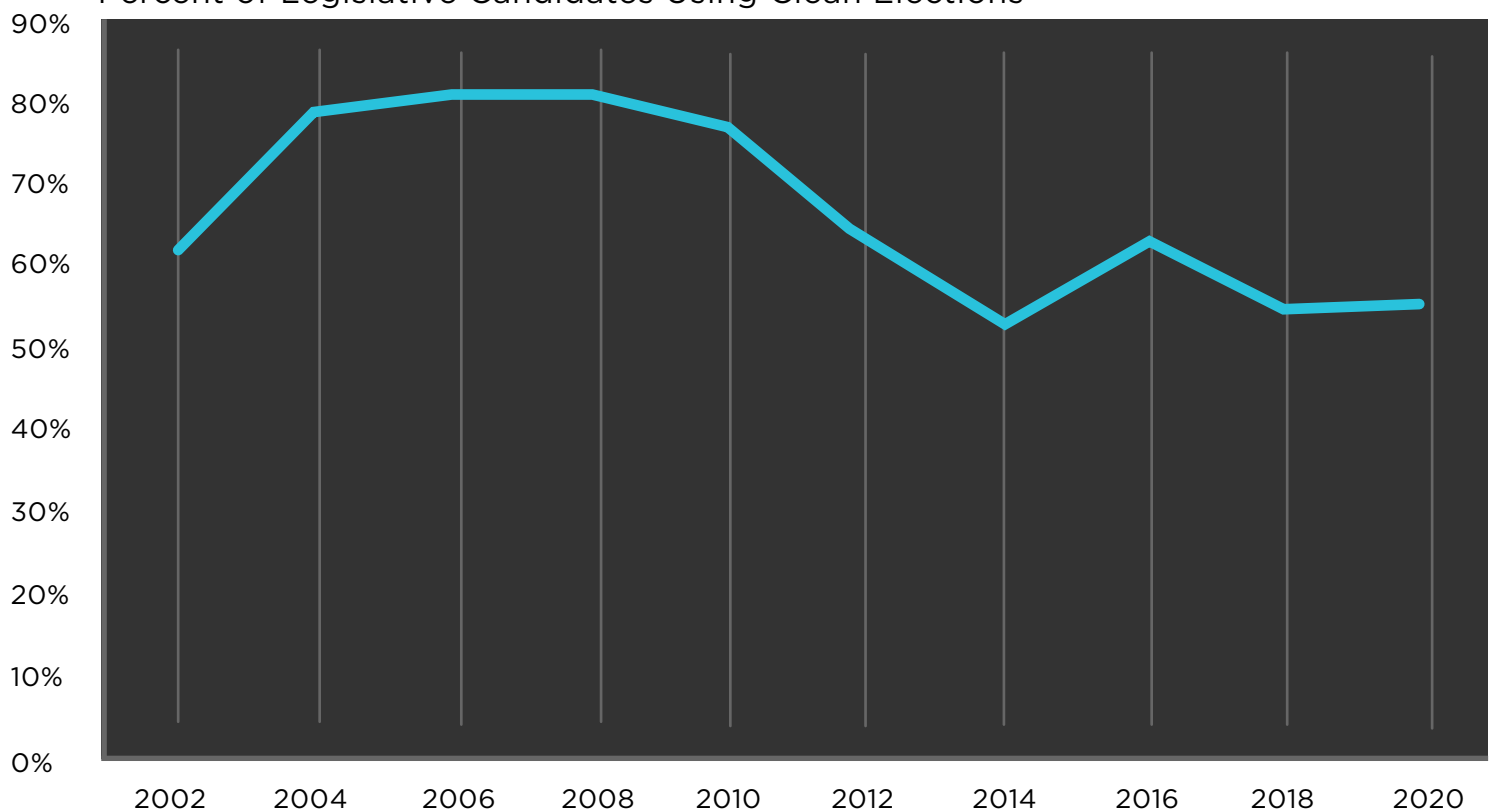
- Our data looked at a total of 721 candidates on the ballot in the 2018 and 2020 election cycles. There were 375 candidates on the 2018 general election ballot, and 346 candidates in the 2020 general election.
- A total of 206 candidates in the 2018 general election used Clean Elections. In 2020 a total of 192 used the program. The all-time participation high occurred in the 2006 cycle when 314 general election candidates qualified and used the program.
- Over the years many women have told us that Clean Elections allowed them to fulfill their goal of running for the legislature. More women — a total of 83 — were elected to the legislature in 2020 than ever in Maine history.

- Women candidates fared well in the general election. Their success rate of 63% is the highest in our data going back to 2002.
- Fewer (214) male candidates appeared on the ballot in the general election than ever in Maine history.
- Democratic participation continues to outpace Republican. There were 62 Republican candidates in the Clean Election program (39% of Republican candidates) and 122 Democratic candidates in the Clean Election program (72% of Democratic candidates). Republican participation remains substantial, especially in the Senate.
- There were fewer open seats in 2020 than in most election cycles — only 41, as compared to 59 the previous cycle. 73% of the open seat winners used Clean Elections.
- 2020 was a good year for incumbents. 122 House incumbents sought reelection, and 106 of them succeeded. 28 incumbent Senators sought reelection, with 25 winning their contests.



CLEAN ELECTIONS PARTICIPATION TREND

Percent of Legislative Candidates Using Clean Elections





MCEA Data: An Overview

The following tables illustrate rates of participation in the Clean Election program and related metrics. The data includes participation rates since 2002, detail on House and Senate candidate demographics and trends, rates of participation by political party, and the success rates of Clean Election candidates in these groupings over the years.

[KEY: CE = Clean Elections]

FIGURE 17-1

The total number of Clean Election candidates in the general election fell to 192, the lowest since 2002 but still well over half of all candidates. The number of winning candidates using private funding increased between the 2018 and 2020 elections.

MCEA Participation: Summary Data	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Candidates for House & Senate in General Election	369	374	385	385	376	359	375	346
# of Candidates Using CE	230	303	295	242	199	227	206	192
% of Candidates Using CE	62%	81%	77%	63%	53%	63%	55%	55%
# of Winning Candidates Using CE	111	158	148	131	107	118	117	110
% of Winning Candidates Using CE	60%	85%	80%	70%	58%	64%	63%	59%
% of Candidates Using CE Who Won	48%	52%	50%	54%	54%	52%	57%	57%
# of Candidates Using Private Funding	139	71	90	143	177	132	169	154
# of Winning Candidates Using Private Funding	75	28	38	55	79	67	69	76
% of Candidates Using Private Funding Who Won	54%	39%	42%	38%	45%	51%	41%	49%

FIGURE 17-2

The total number of House candidates was the lowest since we started tracking, in part due to COVID-19. Accordingly, the number of House candidates using Clean Elections was also lower than in previous years, yet still robust.

MCEA Participation: House and Senate	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Senate Candidates in General Election	71	77	72	74	76	71	70	71
# of Senate Candidates Using Clean Elections	51	59	62	55	50	48	51	48
% of Senate Candidates Using Clean Elections	72%	77%	86%	74%	66%	68%	73%	68%
# of Winning Senate Candidates Using CE	27	28	30	5	24	26	26	25
% of Winning Senate Candidates Using CE	77%	80%	86%	14%	69%	74%	74%	71%
Total # of House Candidates Using CE	298	297	313	311	300	288	300	275
# of House Candidates Using CE	179	244	233	187	149	179	154	144
% of House Candidates Using CE	60%	82%	74%	60%	50%	62%	51%	52%
# of Winning House Candidates Using CE	84	130	118	128	83	93	91	85
% of Winning House Candidates Using CE	56%	86%	78%	85%	55%	62%	60%	56%

FIGURE 17-3

A total of 122 Democratic candidates used Clean Elections, while about half as many Republicans (62) qualified for the program. This continues a trend since 2000 with substantial use in both parties, but lower use among the GOP candidates. 54% of unenrolled candidates chose the Clean Elections option.

MCEA Participation: By Party	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Republican Candidates	168	167	181	182	175	168	173	158
# of Winning Republican Candidates	84	69	98	73	89	90	71	80
# of Republican Candidates Using CE	91	119	132	84	47	79	55	62
% of Republican Candidates Using CE	54%	71%	73%	46%	27%	47%	32%	39%
# of Winning Republican Candidates Using CE	35	51	71	35	29	40	25	27
% of Republican Candidates Using CE Who Won	38%	43%	53%	42%	62%	51%	45%	44%
% of Winning Republican Candidates Using CE	42%	74%	72%	48%	33%	44%	35%	34%
Total # of Democratic Candidates	173	186	178	176	172	177	176	169
# of Winning Democratic Candidates	98	116	86	88	93	94	110	102
# of Democratic Candidates Using CE	122	169	156	146	133	141	138	122
% of Democratic Candidates Using CE	71%	91%	88%	83%	77%	80%	78%	72%
# of Winning Democratic Candidates Using CE	72	106	75	68	76	77	87	80
% of Democratic Candidates Using CE Who Won	60%	63%	48%	47%	57%	55%	63%	66%
% of Winning Democratic Candidates Using CE	73%	91%	87%	77%	82%	82%	79%	78%
Total # of Green Party Candidates	11	9	12	7	13	1	6	6
# of Green Party Candidates Using CE	8	7	4	4	11	0	0	1
% of Green Party Candidates Using CE	73%	78%	33%	57%	85%	0%	0%	17%
# of Winning Green Party Candidates Using CE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of Unenrolled Candidates	n/a	12	14	20	16	13	19	13
# of Unenrolled Candidates Using CE	n/a	8	3	8	8	7	13	7
% of Unenrolled Candidates Using CE	n/a	67%	21%	40%	50%	54%	68%	54%
# of Winning Unenrolled Candidates Using CE	n/a	1	2	17	2	2	5	3

KEY:

CE = Clean Elections

FIGURE 17-4

Republican Senate candidates were more likely to utilize Clean Elections than those in the House. Republicans only ran 125 candidates in the House, leaving 26 seats uncontested.

Further Breakdown by Party: Republicans	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Republican Senate Candidates	35	36	35	34	34	33	32	33
# of Republican Senate Candidates Using CE	25	27	33	23	15	19	18	22
% of Republican Senate Candidates Using CE	71%	75%	94%	68%	44%	58%	56%	67%
# of Winning Republican Senate Candidates	17	15	20	15	21	18	14	13
# of Winning Republican Senate Candidates Using CE	13	12	18	12	11	12	8	8
% of Winning Republican Senate Candidates Using CE	77%	80%	90%	80%	52%	67%	57%	62%
Total # of Republican House Candidates	133	131	146	131	141	135	141	125
# of Republican House Candidates Using CE	66	92	99	109	32	60	37	40
% of Republican House Candidates Using CE	50%	70%	68%	83%	23%	44%	26%	32%
# of Winning Republican House Candidates	67	54	78	54	68	72	57	67
# of Winning Republican House Candidates Using CE	22	39	53	50	18	28	17	19
% of Winning Republican House Candidates Using CE	33%	72%	68%	93%	26%	39%	30%	28%

FIGURE 17-5

26 out of 35 Senate Democratic candidates opted for Clean Elections in 2020 — a strong endorsement of the program but still a decline from the total of 31 using it in 2018. The fraction of winning Senate Democratic candidates using Clean Elections slipped to 74% in 2020 — the lowest in the data.

Further Breakdown by Party: Democrats	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Democratic Senate Candidates	31	36	33	33	35	34	36	35
# of Democratic Senate Candidates Using CE	24	29	27	18	28	26	31	26
% of Democratic Senate Candidates Using CE	78%	81%	82%	55%	80%	76%	86%	74%
# of Winning Democratic Senate Candidates	18	20	14	9	14	17	21	22
# of Winning Democratic Senate Candidates Using CE	14	16	11	5	13	14	18	17
% of Winning Democratic Senate Candidates Using CE	78%	80%	79%	56%	93%	82%	86%	77%
Total # of Democratic House Candidates	142	150	145	137	137	143	140	134
# of Democratic House Candidates Using CE	98	140	129	105	105	115	107	96
% of Democratic House Candidates Using CE	69%	93%	89%	77%	77%	80%	76%	72%
# of Winning Democratic House Candidates	80	96	72	79	79	77	89	80
# of Winning Democratic House Candidates Using CE	58	90	64	63	63	63	69	63
% of Winning Democratic House Candidates Using CE	73%	94%	89%	80%	80%	82%	78%	79%

KEY:

CE = Clean Elections



MCEA Data

Privately Funded Candidates versus Clean Elections Candidates

The following tables analyze races where one or more Clean Elections candidates ran against one or more privately funded candidates. As in previous reports, these results confirm that on average, privately funded candidates are not more likely to win against Clean Elections candidates. No doubt, many other factors contributed to this outcome.

FIGURE 17-6
26 out of 35 Senate Democratic candidates opted for Clean Elections in 2020 — a strong endorsement of the program but still a decline from the total of 31 using it in 2018. The fraction of winning Senate Democratic candidates using Clean Elections slipped to 74% in 2020 — the lowest in the data.

Privately Funded Candidates versus Clean Elections Candidates: 2020 Senate and House	Senate	House
Number of Privately Funded Candidate v. CE Candidate Races	12	62
Number of Privately Funded Candidates Defeating CE Opponents	5	27
Percent of Privately Funded Candidates Defeating CE Opponents	42%	44%
Number of CE Candidates Defeating Privately Funded Opponents	7	35
Percent of CE Candidates Defeating Privately Funded Opponents	58%	56%

KEY:
CE = Clean Elections

FIGURE 17-7

There were fewer open seat races in 2020, as most incumbents sought to return to legislative service. Maine's term limit law prohibits legislators from seeking more than four consecutive 2-year terms, so in a typical election cycle many races do not include an incumbent candidate seeking re-election. Only 14 open seat races featured privately funded candidates facing off against Clean Elections candidates.

**Candidates Using Clean Elections v. Privately
Funded Candidates: Summary Data**

	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
# of Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	57	61	90	101	82	105	74
# of Candidates in Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	121	138	194	206	168	226	154
# of Publicly Funded Candidates in Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	64	71	99	104	84	112	75
# of Publicly Funded Candidates Who Defeated Privately Funded Opponents	37	34	59	57	42	66	42
# of Privately Funded Candidates Who Defeated Publicly Funded Candidates	20	27	31	44	40	39	32
# of Open Seat Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	11	16	37	70	14	39	14
# of Publicly Funded Candidates in Open Seats Races Who Defeated Privately Funded Opponents	9	9	23	17	11	25	8
# of Races with Incumbents With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	46	45	57	68	32	58	52
# of Races with Incumbents Where MCEA Funded Incumbent Defeated Privately Funded Opponent	28	23	29	17	29	34	33
# of Races with Incumbents Where MCEA Funded Challenger Defeated Privately Funded Incumbent	2	2	7	3	3	7	1

FIGURE 17-8

In the two Senate races with privately funded candidates competing against publicly funded candidates, the privately funded candidate won both times.

**Candidates Using Clean Elections v. Privately
Funded Candidates: Senate**

	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
# of Senate Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	12	6	12	19	15	16	12
# of Candidates in Senate Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	27	13	26	40	31	35	27
# of Publicly Funded Candidates in Senate Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	15	8	14	22	15	18	13
# of Senate Publicly Funded Candidates Who Defeated Privately Funded Opponents	7	3	10	12	10	9	7
% of Senate Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Publicly Funded Candidates	58%	50%	83%	63%	67%	56%	58%
# of Privately Funded Senate Candidates Who Defeated Publicly Funded Candidates	5	3	2	7	5	7	5
% of Senate Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Privately Funded Candidates	42%	50%	17%	37%	33%	44%	42%
# of Open Seat Senate Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	3	0	6	12	3	8	2
# of Open Seat Senate Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates won by Publicly Funded Candidates	2	0	5	5	1	3	0
# of Senate Races with Incumbents with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	9	6	6	13	13	7	9
# of Senate Races with Incumbents with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Incumbent Publicly Funded Candidates	5	1	5	7	8	5	6
# of Senate Races with Incumbents with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Challenger Publicly Funded Candidates	0	2	0	0	1	1	1

FIGURE 17-9

There were only 62 House races in 2020 where privately funded candidates ran against Clean Elections candidates — the lowest since 2010.

**Candidates Using Clean Elections v. Privately
Funded Candidates: House**

	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
# of House Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	45	55	78	82	67	89	62
# of Candidates in House Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	94	126	168	166	137	191	127
# of Publicly Funded Candidates in House Races With Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	49	63	85	82	69	94	62
# of House Publicly Funded Candidates Who Defeated Privately Funded Opponents	30	31	49	37	32	57	35
% of House Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Publicly Funded Candidates	67%	56%	63%	45%	48%	64%	56%
# of Privately Funded House Candidates Who Defeated Publicly Funded Candidates	15	24	29	37	35	32	27
% of House Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Privately Funded Candidates	33%	44%	37%	45%	52%	36%	44%
# of Open Seat House Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	8	16	31	58	25	31	12
# of Open Seat House Races with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates won by Publicly Funded Candidates	7	9	18	12	10	22	8
# of House Races with Incumbents with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates	37	39	51	55	52	51	43
# of House Races with Incumbents with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Incumbent Publicly Funded Candidates	21	22	24	30	21	29	27
# of House Races with Incumbents with Privately Funded Candidates v. Publicly Funded Candidates Won by Challenger Publicly Funded Candidates	2	0	7	3	2	6	0



MCEA Data

Incumbents, Challengers, and Open Seats

The following tables compare the participation rates and election outcomes of incumbents, challengers, and open seat candidates using Clean Elections.

FIGURE 17-10

The number of House races in which incumbents sought to hold their seats was the highest since at least 2000. 106 out of the 122 incumbent House members seeking reelection were successful.

Incumbents	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Incumbent Candidates	122	135	139	121	126	147	133	150
# of Incumbent Candidates Using CE	62	108	112	77	82	93	74	86
% of Incumbent Candidates Using CE	51%	80%	81%	64%	65%	63%	56%	57%
# of Incumbents Who Won Election	107	125	119	104	98	125	116	131
% of Incumbents Who Won Election	88%	93%	86%	86%	78%	85%	87%	87%
# of CE Incumbents Who Won Election	57	100	94	66	66	82	71	73
% of CE Incumbents Who Won Election	92%	93%	84%	86%	80%	88%	96%	85%
# of Incumbent Senate Candidates	27	27	25	22	25	26	25	28
# of Incumbent Senate Candidates Using CE	21	21	19	20	19	18	19	20
% of Incumbent Senate Candidates Using CE	78%	78%	76%	91%	76%	69%	76%	71%
# of Senate Incumbents Who Won Election	—	25	21	18	20	24	22	25
# of Senate CE Incumbents Who Won Election	—	19	16	16	14	16	19	17
# of Incumbent House Candidates	95	108	114	99	101	121	108	122
# of Incumbent House Candidates Using CE	41	87	93	57	63	75	55	66
% of Incumbent House Candidates Using CE	43%	81%	82%	58%	62%	62%	51%	54%
# of House Incumbents Who Won Election	—	100	98	86	84	109	94	106
# of House CE Incumbents Who Won Election	—	81	78	50	52	66	52	56

KEY:

CE = Clean Elections

FIGURE 17-11

Only 34% of challengers used Clean Elections – a lower figure than many expected. MCCE will analyze this trend, which may be attributed to perceived difficulties qualifying for Clean Elections during the shut-down and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challengers	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Challengers	125	134	143	122	122	137	151	182
# of Challengers Using CE	83	102	99	74	52	86	72	61
% of Challengers Using CE	66%	76%	69%	61%	43%	63%	48%	34%
# of Challengers Who Won Election	23	10	20	18	20	18	11	14
% Challengers Who Won Election	18%	7%	14%	15%	16%	13%	7%	8%
# of Challengers Using CE Who Won Election	14	10	14	16	9	11	10	7
% of Challengers Using CE Who Won Election	17%	10%	14%	22%	17%	13%	14%	11%
# of Challengers in Senate	24	33	26	24	30	27	26	41
# of Challengers In Senate Using CE	17	24	22	16	19	16	18	19
% of Challengers In Senate Using CE	71%	73%	85%	67%	63%	59%	69%	46%
# of Challengers in House	101	101	117	122	92	110	125	141
# of Challengers In House Using CE	66	78	77	74	33	70	54	42
% of Challengers In House Using CE	65%	77%	66%	61%	36%	64%	43%	30%

FIGURE 17-12

The percentage of open seat candidates using Clean Elections who won their races was relatively low at 43%. MCCE will analyze this data in more detail for trends or anomalies.

Open Seats	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Open Seats	56	51	47	65	60	39	59	41
Total # of Open Seat Candidates	122	105	103	135	128	75	135	115
# of Open Seat Candidates Using CE	85	93	84	91	65	48	73	69
% of Open Seat Candidates Using CE	70%	89%	82%	67%	51%	64%	54%	60%
# of Open Seat Candidates Using CE Who Won Election	40	48	40	49	32	25	36	30
% of Open Seat Candidates Using CE Who Won Election	47%	52%	48%	54%	49%	52%	49%	43%
# of Open Seat Candidates Using Private Funding	37	12	19	44	63	27	61	45
# of Open Seat Candidates Using Private Funding Who Won Election	16	3	7	15	30	8	23	11
% of Open Seat Candidates Using Private Funding Who Won Election	43%	25%	37%	34%	48%	30%	38%	24%
% of Open Seats Won by Candidates Using CE	71%	94%	85%	75%	53%	64%	61%	73%
# of Open Seat Candidates in Senate	20	17	21	27	21	18	32	23
# of Open Seat Candidates in Senate Using CE	13	14	21	19	12	14	19	14
% of Open Seat Candidates in Senate Using CE	65%	82%	100%	70%	57%	78%	59%	61%
# of Open Seat Candidates in House	102	88	82	91	107	57	103	92
# of Open Seat Candidates in House Using CE	72	79	63	72	53	34	54	55
% of Open Seat Candidates in House Using CE	70%	90%	77%	79%	50%	60%	52%	60%



MCEA Data

Clean Elections Funding and Candidate Gender

FIGURE 17-13

A record 63% of women candidates won their races, yielding a total of 83 women legislators, an all-time record. 69% of elected women used Clean Elections, compared to 51% of elected men.

Women and Men / Clean Elections Funding

	'02	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18	'20
Total # of Women Legislative Candidates	98	113	111	105	111	110	140	132
# of Women Legislative Candidates Using CE	68	99	89	77	73	76	86	85
% of All Candidates Who Are Women	27%	30%	29%	27%	29%	31%	37%	38%
% of Women Candidates Using CE	70%	88%	80%	73%	66%	69%	61%	64%
# of Winning Women Candidates	50	55	52	54	54	63	72	83
% of Women Candidates Who Won Election	51%	49%	47%	51%	49%	57%	51%	63%
# of Women Candidates Using CE Who Won Election	36	49	42	44	37	42	52	57
% of Women Using CE Who Won Election	53%	49%	47%	57%	51%	55%	60%	67%
% of All Women Elected Using CE	72%	89%	81%	81%	69%	67%	72%	69%
Total # of Men Legislative Candidates	271	261	274	280	265	249	235	214
# of Men Legislative Candidates Using CE	162	204	206	165	126	151	120	107
% of All Candidates Who Are Men	74%	70%	71%	73%	69%	69%	63%	62%
% of Men Candidates Using CE	60%	78%	75%	59%	48%	61%	51%	50%
# of Winning Men Candidates	136	131	134	132	132	123	114	103
% of Men Candidates Who Won Election	50%	50%	49%	47%	50%	49%	49%	48%
# of Men Candidates Using CE Who Won Election	61	109	106	87	70	77	65	53
% of Men Using CE Who Won Election	38%	53%	51%	53%	56%	51%	54%	50%
% of All Men Elected Using CE	55%	83%	79%	66%	53%	63%	57%	51%

KEY:

CE = Clean Elections

Conclusion

Through ups and downs in participation rates and changes in the design of Clean Elections, the program continues to serve as the national benchmark for full public funding of legislative elections. An entire generation of Maine candidates has been able to wage successful campaigns while avoiding the pitfalls and compromises all too common among those raising private special interest money for their campaigns.

The 2018 and 2020 election cycles reveal some interesting trends. In the unprecedented and tumultuous 2020 election cycle, more women were elected to the legislature than ever in Maine history. Clean Elections candidate participation dipped to 192 candidates or just 55% of the total. Even so, the percentage of winning candidates who used Clean Elections in 2020 increased from 69% to 76%.

The popularity of Clean Elections is apparent not only from the victories of participating candidates, but in the thousands of Mainers who made \$5 qualifying contributions to those candidates, enabling them to meet the strict qualifying requirements of the program. **The enthusiasm of the public for Clean Elections has never wavered.**

It has been said that 2020 was a “stress test” for our state and national election systems. Maine’s Clean Elections system passed the test. MCCE will continue to analyze campaign finance reports, candidate information, and participation data as part of our ongoing effort to educate the public on the vital role of the Clean Elections law and other critical issues in our ongoing effort to secure the blessings of a more perfect democracy.

