

Legislative Update 2017: 1

Rapid Response Team
March 20, 2017

Welcome to the first edition of MCCE Action's new-and-improved Rapid Response Team Weekly Update! We'll be covering:

- What happened last week.
- What's happening this week.
- What you can do about it!
- What's on the horizon.

You're getting this email because you indicated you'd like to be informed about Clean Elections, Ranked Choice Voting and other democracy issues in front of the Maine legislature. If you'd like to opt-out of this email, you can [click here](#).

Last week on...

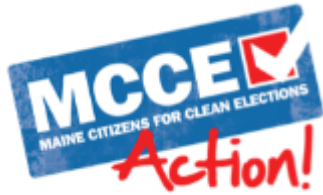
If the legislative session were a TV drama, this is the part where we'd recap last week's action in a convenient flashback! Imagine the dramatic voiceover...

As the pace of the 128th Legislature picks up, Clean Elections is under serious threat. MCCE is in Augusta working to defend our law, and to advance new policies to reduce the influence of big money in our elections and our government.

Here are updates on some of the bills we are tracking:

Threats to Clean Elections: MCCE is fighting back on efforts to underfund Clean Elections, eliminate funding in gubernatorial races, and pass harmful amendments to the statute.

[LD300](#) would eliminate the gubernatorial program from the Clean Election statute. We strongly oppose this attempt by Clean Elections opponents to undermine our law (see MCCE testimony [here](#), and the Press Herald editorial [here](#)). Unfortunately, since it was voted out of the Veterans and Legal Affairs (VLA) committee on a divided, party-line vote with Republicans in support, and Democrats and Independent Rep. Owen Casas against, this bill is still alive. **This bill could come to the House for a full vote at any time.**



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We've also been working on Clean Elections funding. Last month, MCCE Action volunteers filled the Appropriations and Financial Affairs hearing room for a public hearing on the governor's biennial budget that dramatically underfunds Clean Elections. The committee heard testimony from Mainers of all political stripes, from nine counties, including former legislators, candidates and people who had never been to a legislative hearing before. Everyone who testified made strong cases for fully funding both legislative and gubernatorial Clean Elections for 2018. Stand by for the next steps on the funding battle.

Bills to Reign in Lobbyist Influence:

[LD413](#) - The bill to prohibit contributions from lobbyists to candidates and lawmakers - remains tabled in the VLA committee awaiting a vote. See our testimony [here](#), and Senator Justin Chenette's Op-Ed [here](#). **There is still time to contact the VLA committee members and express your support for the bill.**

Coming this week

This is a relatively quiet week in the VLA committee.

On Wednesday, there will be a work session on LD594, which would prohibit candidates from paying themselves for services out of PACs that they control. MCCE supports this bill. You can listen to the [work session here](#).

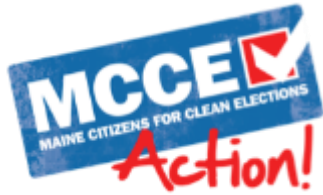
There will also be a public hearing on [LD791](#), An Act Regarding Advertisements by Maine Clean Election Act Candidates, which MCCE is opposing because it places unequal burdens on Clean Election candidates, and on LD793, An Act To Limit Campaign Independent Expenditures. MCCE is planning to testify 'neither for nor against' on [LD793](#) do to constitutional concerns, but we applaud the sponsors' desire to limit the role of money in politics!

You can see all the bills coming up before Veterans and Legal Affairs, and listen to live audio from hearings [here](#).

What can you do?

If you have...

5 minutes: Have you contacted your legislator yet and asked them to vote NO on LD300? This bill, which tries to eliminate Clean Elections for gubernatorial candidates - could come up for a vote at any time. You can find



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your legislators and their phone numbers [here](#). Let me know if you contact them, and any response you receive.

30 minutes: [Contact the VLA committee](#) in support of LD413. See more information about the bill [here](#).

A few hours: Come lobby in Augusta! We are happy to have volunteers join us in Augusta to talk to lawmakers in person! On Tuesdays, MCCE staff are in Augusta working on Clean Election issues, and again on Thursdays, lobbying with Ranked Choice Voting. [Let us know](#) if you are interested in joining us on any day!

Keep on your calendar

April 13 - Solemn Occasion Oral Argument

Last month, the Maine Senate invoked the “solemn occasion” provision of the Maine constitution, which asked for a court review of the Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) law. The League of Women Voters of Maine and MCCE [filed a brief](#) with the Maine Supreme Judicial Court arguing that no solemn occasion exists and affirming the opinions of constitutional scholars and experts that RCV is fully constitutional. [Read more here](#). Oral arguments will occur on April 13, and an advisory decision is expected later in April. Maine people created this law, and it should be implemented, just like every other new law. On the 13th, we plan to fill the courthouse with Maine people who support immediate implementation of the Ranked Choice Voting law, and then head over to the legislature to lobby for the bill.

April 23 - Volunteer Convention

On Sunday, April 23rd, MCCE supporters from around the state will gather in Waterville to build stronger advocacy, organizing and communication skills, and discuss what comes next for Mainer's democracy. More information coming soon, but you won't want to miss it.