



Clean Elections Legislative Record 2017

The First Regular Session of the 128th Maine Legislature was full of twists and turns. Ultimately, MCCE and our supporters defeated all the bills attacking Clean Elections and transparency, and secured funding for Clean Elections in the state budget.

With MCCE's expanded mission, we also participated in the defense of Ranked Choice Voting. Despite a negative opinion from the Maine Supreme Court, Ranked Choice Voting remains on the books for now.

We were disappointed with the outcomes for our proactive bills to ban legislator-controlled PACs and lobbyist contributions, as well as to establish Automatic Voter Registration in Maine. We will take the lessons learned from the session and continue to fight for these reforms.

What was not disappointing was the great team we worked with – the legislators who fought hard for their constituents, the partners from like-minded organizations who stood with us, and most of all, the volunteers and constituents who kept up the pressure on their legislators and made their opinions known in the halls of Augusta and over the phone—more than 800 of you over the last six months! We couldn't have done any of this without you.

MCCE testified on 27 bills this session—the most important are described below. (You can see our full testimony at mainecleanelections.org/testimony). We encourage you to review how your Senator and Representative voted on each of these democracy reform issues. We hope you use this record as a starting point for conversation and thank your lawmakers for their votes or ask them for explanations. You can find your legislators' contact information at: legislature.maine.gov/house/townlist.htm

A note on this voting record: when the House or Senate takes initial votes on a bill, members are voting on one of the “reports” that has come from the committee with jurisdiction. For example, a bill that came out of committee with 6 committee members voting in support, and 7 in opposition, would have a Majority Ought Not To Pass Report, and a Minority Ought to Pass Report. In the situation of such a “divided committee report,” the first thing the House or Senate must do is choose which report it will consider. If the House votes to accept a report different from the report that MCCE supported, MCCE disapproves of the “yay” vote. This can be confusing, because what shows up as a “nay” vote procedurally is actually a vote in favor of the bill as endorsed by MCCE. So depending on the procedural situation, a “nay” vote is sometimes good—even though we support the bill. Confused? Don't despair! Just follow the colors on the voting record provided—green means support of MCCE's position, red means opposition, and white means the legislator didn't vote on that bill.

BILLS MCCE SUPPORTED

LD1210: An Act Regarding the Maine Clean Election Fund. This bill, proposed by the Maine Ethics Commission at our urging, directed the legislature to fund Clean Elections by (1) allocating statutory funding, (2) returning \$1.7 million owed to the Maine Clean Election Fund, and (3) transferring \$3.0 million to the Fund in 2018 instead of 2019. The bill passed the Senate 18-16, and the House 77-70, with bipartisan votes in both chambers. As with all funding bills, LD1210 then went to the Appropriations Committee. Ultimately, Clean Elections funding was addressed in the state budget compromise, which included the \$3.0 million annual transfer, as well as the early transfer of 2019 funds, but not the return of \$1.7 million.

RESULT: **MOSTLY SUCCESSFUL** (BUDGET PASSED)

LD413: An Act to Limit the Influence of Lobbyists by Expanding the Prohibition on Accepting Political Contributions. MCCE worked closely with Senator Justin Chenette to ban contributions to legislative candidates from lobbyists (and the special interests that employ lobbyists) in order to reduce undue influence over the legislature. The bill received serious debate and consideration, but opposition was too strong. We were disappointed that LD413 failed in the Senate 19-16 and in the House 112 to 30.

RESULT: **DEAD**

LD1211: An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Legislative Political Action Committees. Legislator-controlled Political Action Committees (PACs) allow privately financed candidates to avoid contribution limits and take unrestricted contributions from individuals, corporations, unions and other PACs. This is a major thoroughfare for special interest money coming into our elections. MCCE worked with Senator Ben Chipman to ban so-called Leadership PACs for all candidates, which is the unfinished business of a 2015 ban on PACs for Clean Elections candidates (and legislators). Despite popular support at public hearings, behind-the-scenes lobbying by political insiders killed the bill. LD1211 failed in the Senate 18-17, and died without a roll call vote in the House.

RESULT: **DEAD**

LD1232: An Act to Require the Secretary of State to Automatically Register Nonregistered Persons Who Are Qualified to Vote through Records of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. This bill, sponsored by Representative Jared Golden, would have established Automatic Voter Registration in Maine, reducing the burden on voters and increasing participation, as well as increasing the security and integrity of our elections. LD1232 passed the House 74-68, but failed in the Senate 20-15.

RESULT: **DEAD**

LD1624: RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Implement Ranked-choice Voting. After the Maine Supreme Court issued an advisory opinion that the Ranked Choice Voting law passed by voters in 2016 would be unconstitutional for state offices, Senator Cathy Breen sponsored a constitutional amendment to allow the law to move forward. With a House vote of 78-68, LD1624 failed to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority required to allow voters to consider the measure. The bill also failed in the Senate 17-17.

RESULT: **DEAD**

BILLS MCCE OPPOSED

LD126: An Act to Establish New Monetary Caps for Legislative Candidates under the Maine Clean Election Act. This bill would have undermined the Maine Clean Election Act by reducing the funds available to candidates by one-third, and reversing a large part of the gain achieved by the 2015 citizen initiative. LD126 failed in the Senate 15-19, and died without a roll call vote in the House.

RESULT: **DEAD**

LD300: An Act to Preserve Funding for the Maine Clean Election Act Program by Removing Gubernatorial Candidates from Eligibility. This bill would have undermined Clean Elections by eliminating funding for gubernatorial candidates—despite Maine voters voicing strong support to re-establish gubernatorial Clean Elections in 2015. LD300 initially passed the Senate 17-16, failed in the House 82-63, and then died in the Senate 14-20 (several Senators changed their votes after hearing from constituents in opposition to the bill).

RESULT: **DEAD**

LD1033: An Act to Eliminate the 24-Hour Reporting Requirement under the Election Laws. This bill would have rolled back existing disclosure requirements in the days leading up to an election, meaning that voters wouldn't know who was behind some major contributions until well after Election Day. LD1033 passed the Senate 18-16, but the House ultimately killed the bill without a roll call

RESULT: **DEAD**

LD1625: An Act to Repeal the Ranked-choice Voting Law. This bill was the full repeal of RCV, and we strongly opposed it. MCCE devised and supported an amendment to LD1625 which would have preserved RCV for all federal races and for state race primaries—the elections that the Maine Supreme Court did not find to be in conflict with Maine's Constitution. Despite our opposition, the full repeal passed the Senate 21-13. We were gratified to see the partial-repeal amendment, which preserved much of the law, pass the House 79-66. The two chambers could not come to agreement, killing the bill and ensuring that the issue will re-emerge in a future legislative session.

RESULT: **DEAD**



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Maine Citizens for
Clean Elections
is 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.

