

## **Letter: Congress needs a clean elections law**

Jan 11, 2010 9:50 am

There is much to dislike in the pending health-care reform legislation, as well as many things to applaud in it. What is most distasteful of all has been the process that has led to the current situation.

First came some good proposals to provide real competition among insurers, control costs and ensure that everyone would have access to coverage. Then came a barrage of television ads and public rallies orchestrated by public relations firms working for insurance providers. The ads were accompanied by extensive lobbying in Congress by representatives of those same companies, entities that are able to influence substantial contributions to campaigns.

It should be no surprise that fundamental reform was abandoned in the face of these lobbying pressures. Large corporations control the outcome of bills far more than they should, primarily through the influence of campaign contributions.

In Maine we have developed a better way to finance campaigns, the Clean Elections process. It takes away the influence of large donations, and lets legislators focus on policy interests.

Legislation is pending in Congress that would apply that same process to congressional campaigns. Reps. Chellie Pingree and Michael Michaud have signed onto the Fair Elections Now Act as co-sponsors, recognizing that getting the influence of big money out of politics is good public policy. We should all be encouraging Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins to become co-sponsors of the Senate version of that same bill. It is time to fix the legislative process in Washington.

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