

# Portland Press Herald

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## **Our View: Clean Election Act funds prove hard to get, and that's good**

**Serious candidates with a proven ability to organize are the ones who should get support.**

There may be a whole herd of candidates running for governor this year, but only a select few can expect to do so on the public's dime.

So far, the only ones that look likely to qualify for financing under the Clean Election Act are among the best-known figures in the crowded race, Democrats Patrick McGowan, Elizabeth Mitchell and John Richardson, along with Republican Peter Mills.

The narrowness of the publicly financed field is probably a reflection on how hard it is to qualify. As a result of changes made to the law last year, candidates have to come up with 3,250 \$5 checks and raise \$40,000 in "seed money" by April 1.

It should come as no surprise that Mitchell and Mills, current legislators, and McGowan and Richardson, Baldacci administration commissioners who resigned when they announced their candidacies, are the ones with the kind of political organization necessary to pull off that demonstration of support required to get the public money.

That there are so few members of the field to qualify is a good sign that the system is working.

The Clean Elections fund was never meant to be a fairy godmother for Cinderella candidates. The idea was to make sure that future office holders and incumbents spend their time with and make their promises to voters and not just those with the money and interest in contributing to a campaign.

Access to precious public funds should be limited to realistic contenders. Candidates should have to show that they would know what to do with what could end up being more than \$1 million of the public's money before they qualify to start spending it.