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Clean Elections Funds work, leave program alone

Let's keep special interests out of Maine elections.

No other state has done as much as Maine to make running for office possible for ordinary people.

Thanks to the Clean Elections Fund, you don't have to have the support of big money to run and win.

To qualify for Clean Elections dollars, candidates raise a modest number of small donations that go directly into a Clean Elections fund -- not to them. Businesses may not contribute.

Most Maine Republicans, Democrats and independent candidates for the Legislature like the option, and use it to run. And it's cheap: less than \$2 per voter per year.

But there several proposals at the State House this year to weaken the law.

One would stop people from using it to run for governor, creating a glass ceiling for anyone seeking higher office.

Another would force independent candidates to take part in a primary to qualify for Clean Elections funds -- a sort of "anarchists convention" that could take some independents out of the running.

Another would withhold funding from people who don't have primary opponents until primaries are over, making them wait for a second starting gun while their opponents are already racing toward the finish line.

These kinds of changes would make it harder to run "clean."

The Maine Ethics Commission has done a great job evaluating, policing and fine-tuning Clean Elections. Lawmakers should quit second-guessing a healthy, successful, popular program and return their attention to serving Maine people.

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