

# Portland Press Herald

Editorial  
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## **Our View: Campaign crimes point to lessons for future races**

### **The current Clean Election law doesn't give campaigns the tools needed to police volunteers.**

We shouldn't try to draw too many lessons from a single example, but it looks like what went wrong with John Richardson's gubernatorial campaign goes beyond the four volunteers who have been charged with fraud.

As the candidate, Richardson is ultimately responsible, and he paid a price by ending his campaign for the Blaine House. But what happened to him could have happened to any candidate trying to run a publicly financed campaign for governor.

Under the Clean Election Act, candidates for state office qualify for public financing after demonstrating their support by collecting \$5 contributions.

If a candidate is running for the Maine House, the number is 60. If he is running for the Senate, it is 175. Both are achievable by a single dedicated campaigner.

But if he is running for governor, the number is 3,250, or more than any one overbooked candidate could gather on his own, meaning that he has to rely on an army of volunteers.

It's ironic to suggest that a "clean elections" system would encourage people to cheat, but volunteers who want to win favor with a potential governor have both the motive and opportunity to cut corners.

If the Clean Election concept is going to work in gubernatorial races, Maine needs to make these contributions harder to fake and easier to track, so campaigns can monitor the work of their own volunteers. Then the state won't have to rely on whistle-blowers to know when someone is breaking the rules.