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Government as commodity

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Legislative debate over the future of Maine's Clean Election Act, including last week's party-line split of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, incorrectly frames the question.

When voters heartily endorsed the public campaign financing law that took effect in 1996, the clearly defined goal was to reduce the power of money in politics and free candidates to answer to voters rather than donors.

Clean elections isn't about balancing Republican and Democratic special interests. It's about buffering the state's electoral process from the insidious effects that "pay to play" political campaign funding has had on governance.

Failure to update the matching funds component of the law to reflect modern realities would marginalize voters by making the Legislature for sale to the highest bidder.

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