

Village Soup

Democratic radio address

Lawmakers must hear from the public on clean elections

By Rep. Terry Hayes | Oct 22, 2011

The following is text from the Oct. 22, 2011, democratic radio address.

"Good morning, I'm State Representative Terry Hayes of Buckfield and the assistant House Democratic leader.

Thank you for tuning in.

In the next week, lawmakers in Augusta will begin to consider options for how to change our Clean Elections system. Fifteen years ago you sent a strong message to lawmakers – you wanted fair and open elections that didn't favor political insiders or special interests.

With strong majorities, Maine people voted for the creation of a Clean Elections system. Under the system, candidates running for office could accept a set amount of public financing instead of raising campaign dollars from special interests. Year after year, the clean elections program earns continued support from voters and lawmakers.

Clean Elections allow every day citizens to have the strongest influence on your representatives.

Thanks to Clean Elections, the Legislature is populated with farmers, teachers, carpenters, millworkers, retirees and small business people – not just lawyers and professional politicians.

If you are a small business owner and you want to make a difference in state politics, you can because of Clean Elections.

If you are a retiree and you want to spend your time serving your neighbors, you can because of Clean Elections.

If you are self-employed and you want to help your community, you can because of Clean Elections.

You don't need to have personal wealth or a war chest to serve the people in Maine.

You need to work hard, knock on doors, and earn the vote of the people who live in your area.

Instead of courting high-paid lobbyists, candidates for office who run “clean” can focus on the problems and concerns of Maine people. And when once elected, those are the people that will come first.

Clean Elections has proven to limit the influence wealthy out of state corporations and special interests have on our lawmakers. The difference can be seen in how well our lawmakers from both sides of the aisle work together. The Maine Legislature has a reputation for finding bipartisan compromise on what is best for Maine people – avoiding much of the bitter partisan gridlock we see in Washington.

For over a decade, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents have used clean elections funds to run for office. In fact eight out of 10 current lawmakers used clean elections funding to run their campaigns.

Now our Clean Elections system is at risk in Augusta. Lawmakers must revise the system due to a Supreme Court ruling that struck down part of the law that allowed publicly financed candidates to receive matching funds if more money is spent against them.

Without some alternative to the matching funds, our Clean Election system will be less viable for candidates for state House and Senate seats, especially those who may have a tough campaign. If an alternative to our matching funds system is not in place soon, fewer candidates will be able to compete effectively using Clean Elections.

And, fewer Clean Elections candidates means more private fundraising and outside corporate influence in our politics.

Some lawmakers are advocating that we do nothing to fix the system. This can not be an option. Doing nothing closes the door on a system that was mandated by the voters to keep politicians focused on constituents, not special interests.

We don't want our state politics to look like California or New Jersey.

If we do nothing to fix the system, Maine people will lose. I urge you to call your representative and tell them doing nothing is not an option. Maine people must come before special interests.

Thank you for listening. I'm State Rep. Terry Hayes from Buckfield."