

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Letter to the Editor

March 12, 2012

Clean works, so save it

I respectfully disagree with Rep. Andre Cushing about the value of Maine's Clean Election system ("Maine Clean Elections system hits speed bump," BDN Op-Ed, March 5).

For over a decade, clean elections has provided hundreds of Maine people the opportunity to run for office without doing the dreaded money dance that defines campaigns almost everywhere else. Eighty percent of the current legislature used clean elections to win their seat, and many good legislators would not have run without it. In the 2010 election, the strongest participation was in the Republican Senate caucus, but Democrats and others used the system in strong numbers, too.

Despite the few problems that Rep. Cushing mentions, clean elections has enjoyed a remarkably successful run for more than 10 years. The issues that he mentioned have all been corrected with responsible, bipartisan legislative action.

Today, the 125th Legislature must respond to a problem created, not by a candidate, but by a court — the same Supreme Court that brought us Citizens United. In striking down matching funds, the court stripped away an integral part of the law — the part that has allowed clean elections to work for all the candidates who wanted to use it. Lawmakers should adopt the "requalifying" option that was recommended by the Ethics Commission and endorsed by advocates from across the political spectrum.

Maine has always led when it comes to clean elections. Leadership is what we need today, and I call upon our elected leaders to pass the requalifying option and keep our clean election law strong.

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