

April 21, 2012

## **Money spent on elections should be limited**

George Smith's March 28 opinion column and John Benoit's April 10 letter are critical of the Maine's Clean Election law and wrongfully argue for ending the program.

### **KJ Opinion**

Maine has had this law in place for the last 10 years. It was enacted by a referendum vote initiated by people who believed that too often money donated to candidates for public office influenced those candidates to do favors for their donors when elected.

Most Maine people like this law; 80 percent of people elected to the Maine Legislature use these funds to pay for their campaign expenses.

The law, however, has some weaknesses, and it could be made better. Too much money still is spent by political action committees and out-of-state sources on behalf of Maine legislative candidates.

In fact, far too much money is spent to promote candidates every election season. This money could be better spent.

Part of the problem is the result of U.S. Supreme Court decisions that said that money is speech and corporations are people; therefore laws cannot legally restrict the amount of money spent to elect a candidate no matter where that money comes from.

These decisions have had an adverse impact on our Clean Election law, so we need to amend the U.S. Constitution, then make amendments to improve our Clean Election law.

It is obvious that far too much money has already been spent this year in the Republican primaries for president. Much more will be spent by party candidates and independent candidates leading up to the November elections.

We need laws that cannot be rejected by the Supreme Court to bring this situation about. Then, perhaps we can truly have government of the people, for the people and by the people.

Elery Keene  
*Winslow*