

## Letters to the editor, May 9, 2012

### Constructive change needed to bolster Clean Election

I serve on the Public Policy Committee of the Maine Council of Churches, an organization that has long supported the Maine Clean Election Act.

Our ten-year-old law is a bipartisan success story. John Richardson wrote of reduced participation by candidates in our Maine Clean Election Fund, yet 80 percent of our legislators used the system to win their seats while building trusting relationships with voters ("Fewer candidates using 'clean election' funds," April 24).

This year the law needed attention from the Legislature to fix a problem created by a court ruling making fair Clean Election funding more difficult. Unfortunately, the Legislature did not provide the needed repair, so fewer candidates find the system viable, even though a workable solution was at the ready.

The Maine Clean Election Act is about including the voices of all voters in our elections. In the Maine Council of Churches, we believe that Clean Election enhances the relationship between elected officials and local constituents while helping to hold the line against undue influence by wealthy, out-of-state and other special interest groups.

We need a pragmatic system that works for candidates. Candidates need to be free to focus on the issues that face the state of Maine and our communities rather than desperately seeking campaign funds. Maine people have embraced the Clean Election system and made it work. It is desirable for Mainers to contribute \$5 to a candidate and/or support clean elections on their state tax check-off.

The Clean Election fund involves the voters early in the election process, energizes voter participation in campaigns and generates interest in candidates while fostering discussion of important issues.

There will be future opportunities to strengthen Clean Election. Voters need to elect candidates who make this a priority.

**Karen Hessel**

*Cape Elizabeth*