

Portland Press Herald

Letters to the editor, January 22, 2012

Lawmakers should enact option for clean elections

I appreciate the Maine Sunday Telegram's endorsement of a plan to strengthen the citizen-initiated Clean Elections Act in the wake of a damaging Supreme Court decision (Our View, "Lawmakers should fix, not gut, Clean Elections," Jan. 15).

The option favored by this paper, known as the "requalifying" option, was developed by the state's Ethics Commission during its review of the court's ruling last summer.

It is the result of an open public process that included public hearings and much back-and-forth discussion among stakeholders. It has been endorsed by clean election supporters from across the political spectrum, including the nonpartisan Maine Citizens for Clean Elections.

Bad Supreme Court decisions are nothing new to anyone working to get the big money out of politics. But just because a majority on that court espouse some radical notions about campaign finance and the First Amendment doesn't mean that we should give up.

In Maine we have some radical notions of our own. We value the opportunity for all people to participate in our democracy. We think that qualified people should be able to run competitive campaigns.

We value diverse voices in elections because we appreciate the marketplace of ideas they create. We want our candidates to be heard above the din created by PACs and other independent spenders. We want those we elect to serve without financial ties to special interests.

We can't change the court, but we can respond with innovative ideas and bold action to keep our successful Clean Elections system viable. The Legislature should pass the requalifying option without delay.

Alison Smith

president, Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

Portland