

Another View: Clean Election 'fix' will bring more mysterious money to Maine

The changes forced by the courts and the GOP-controlled Legislature will unravel a good system.

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By Rep. Mike Carey

Rep. Andre Cushing, R-Hampden, the assistant Republican leader in the Maine House, wrote in defense of his party's vote to gut the citizen-initiated Clean Elections system. ("Editorial errs in its judgment of revisions to Clean Election system" April 30).

What Cushing doesn't tell you is that he is the lead party in the court case that ultimately forced the change in law. While Cushing and his ideological allies in the Legislature may have won this battle, the people of Maine are the real losers.

The GOP vote to gut Clean Elections essentially put up a welcome sign for Washington-style super political action committees, or "SuperPACs."

Maine people instituted the Clean Elections system by citizen referendum more than a decade ago to ensure that any Mainer could run to serve their neighbors in the state's citizen Legislature -- not just the well-heeled with connections to deep pockets. Maine citizens backed Clean Elections to help ensure that policy could be shaped by small business owners, fishermen, loggers and teachers. We all benefit when the people making our laws work for their neighbors, not for one big campaign donor whose contributions are kept secret.

We may never know which "mysterious" donor gave Mitt Romney nearly half a million dollars last week through a SuperPAC, thanks to federal loopholes. GOP lawmakers have refused to close these kinds of loopholes in our state, too. Do we really want that kind of politics in our state?

Maine's Clean Elections system was a first step in an effort to make our state less susceptible to election buying. The GOP's vote to pull the rug out on Clean Elections takes Maine in the wrong direction -- no matter how Cushing tries to spin it.

Rep. Mike Carey, D-Lewiston, is a member of the Maine House of Representatives.