



ELLSWORTH AMERICAN PHOTO BY STEVE FULLER

Some of the 20 people who headed to Augusta Tuesday for a rally supporting campaign finance regulations pose with their signs outside the bus in Ellsworth. Gary Friedmann (beard and tie), who organized the local delegation, stands in the center.

Money in Politics:

Area Residents Join Rally Against “Root of all Evil”

BY STEVE FULLER

ELLSWORTH — Twenty activists from Hancock and Washington counties boarded a bus bound for Augusta Tuesday morning to call for action against what they see as the troubling influence of outside money in politics.

“I think that money in politics is sort of the root of all evil,” said Bar Harbor resident Susan Murphy, one of those on the bus.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) held a rally at the State House Welcome Center Tuesday morning to mark the three-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling.

In that case, the court struck down previous restrictions on corporate, union and nonprofit spending in political campaigns, ruling the First Amendment did not allow the government to impose such regulations.

Some people and organizations hailed that ruling as a victory for free speech. Senate Republican leader Mitch Mc-

Others, however, have said it essentially allows corporations to drown out the voices of individual citizens.

MCCE said the ruling “paved the way for unlimited spending to influence our elections.”

Bar Harbor resident Gary Friedmann organized the local delegation heading to Augusta (others came from Portland, Brunswick, Belfast and the Blue Hill Peninsula).

He said people at the rally would call on legislators to pass a resolution supporting an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would overturn the *Citizens United* decision.

According to MCCE, 25 towns across Maine have already passed such resolutions and similar efforts are under way in another half-dozen communities, including Brooklin.

Another goal of Tuesday’s rally, Friedmann said, was to encourage legislators to “shore up” Maine’s Clean Election fund.

According to MCCE, Governor Paul LePage’s proposed

mission is to “defend and improve the Maine Clean Election Act and related campaign finance law.”

MCCE Executive Director Andrew Bossie said LePage’s proposal would “ensure that big-money special interests further dominate our elections in 2014.”

Another bus rider, Glenon Friedmann of Bar Harbor, sounded a similar note when asked why she was going to Augusta.

“I’m concerned with the influence big money has on politics,” she said. “I’m concerned that a lot of the voices in my community are not being heard.”

Glenon Friedmann said those voices are being drowned out by people with more money. She said she wants to see campaign finance laws that “even up the playing field” and allow more people to “participate fairly in the democratic process.”

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