



Maine Clean Elections News

P.O. Box 18187, Portland, ME 04112

www.mainecelelections.org

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At Stake in This Election: People Powered Democracy



It's election season, and Maine voters are on the receiving end of a tremendous number of political messages. Our mailboxes are stuffed with postcards and pamphlets. Our phones are ringing with messages to vote for, vote against, or volunteer. Our roadsides are lined with candidate signs. And our airwaves are filled with charges, countercharges, and all manner of political persuasion.

As voters, our job is more than just seeing, hearing, and processing those messages. In each election, one important task is to bring our views and our priorities to those who seek to represent us. Whether they aspire to go to Augusta or Washington, DC, candidates must be informed about what is most important to their future constituents.

If ever there was a time to talk to candidates about money in politics, this is it. Thanks to

the U.S. Supreme Court, we are experiencing the most costly election cycle in history. The SuperPAC phenomenon has made clear that when the floodgates open, hundreds of millions of dollars will deluge campaigns. A recent Sunlight Foundation study found that 78% of the outside spending in the 2012 cycle is directly attributable to the Citizens United decision. That's double what it was in 2010, the cycle that followed that fateful ruling. The trend is clear.

Every candidate vying for a Maine House or Senate seat, and every candidate running for federal office, must be asked where they stand when it comes to reducing the influence of big money on politics. Do they agree that corporations are people when it comes to spending money in political campaigns? Do they believe that money is speech, and

restrictions on raising and spending money in elections are an affront to First Amendment rights?

State House Candidates

Every two years, Maine's entire legislature is up for grabs, and who wins matters. The current legislature weakened our citizen-initiated Clean Elections law. First they decreased the distributions made to participating candidates, and then they refused to replace the matching funds system after it was struck down by a court. The unfortunate result is that today's Clean Election system is not viable for many candidates, and participation has declined as a result.

Elections
(continues page 3)

Maine Towns Stand Up for Government "of, by, and for the People"

What do Arrowsic and Winthrop have in common? What about Bangor and Shapleigh? And what do all of them have to do with Liberty and Freedom?

These are not just municipalities in Maine. They are hotspots of democracy, along with 15 other towns and cities around our state.

Citizens in Maine's largest cities and tiniest towns have organized to pass resolutions at the local level calling for a U.S. Constitutional Amendment on campaign finance.

Portland's City Council started a wave of action, with a

public hearing and a vote back in January – the month that marked the two-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's infamous *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling. Since then, twenty more municipalities have followed suit. Efforts are underway in additional towns.

Nationally, the movement to undo the damage done by *Citizens United* is gaining momentum with local resolutions and state resolutions, too. Six states – California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Vermont passed resolutions in their

legislatures. A majority of lawmakers in both Connecticut and Maryland signed a letter calling on Congress to pass a resolution. Some thirteen bills have been introduced in Congress to amend the Constitution in order to allow for more effective regulation of money in elections.

While the language in these resolutions differs, all aim at the same basic idea: allow Americans to regulate money in political campaigns and reverse *Citizens United*. The resolutions focus on increasing transparency, clarifying that corporations are not people, establishing that

money is not the equivalent of free speech, and empowering legislatures and Congress to enact contribution and expenditure limits.

The Board of Directors of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) adopted a position in favor of the constitutional amendment strategy but has not yet endorsed any specific amendment. Our position reflects the values on which amendments should be based. (see sidebar, page 3)

Stand Up
(continues page 3)



MCCE is a nonpartisan organization that works in the public interest to advocate for, increase public support for, defend and improve the Maine Clean Election Act and related campaign finance law.

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Maine People's Resource Center
Maine State Employees
Association/SEIU Local 1989
Maine Women's Lobby
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Visit us online or mail a check



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MCCE
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Onward and Upward at MCCE

This summer marked the end of my first year at the helm of MCCE, and what a year it's been! We've experienced much growth, and despite the enormity of the problems of money in politics, we feel tremendous momentum.

We've stepped up our work in several important areas. Read all about our new advocacy arm, MCCE Action, our Money in Politics Project, and the movement to promote local resolutions in favor of a U.S. constitutional amendment on campaign finance.

We are delighted to introduce BJ McCollister, MCCE's new Program Director. BJ comes to us with a strong background in field organizing, a passion for social change, and a deep commitment to our mission. He's our point person on the constitutional amendment effort and will be working with volunteers to build a strong grassroots advocacy team.

Two of our board members stepped down at the end of their terms this summer, and I would like to thank both Pam Cahill and Nicola Wells for contributing so much during their years on our board.

Kudos also to two super volunteers, Kris Clark and Mike Labriola. Kris arranged the terrific GreenDrinks event in October, which connected MCCE with several hundred young professionals in Portland. Mike masterminded a behind-the-scenes database conversion that has made a huge improvement in our day-to-day operations.

Friends like these make me optimistic about our work. When it comes to campaign finance



The MCCE team gathers for our annual summer retreat.

reform, Gandhi's words will ultimately prove true: "When the people lead, the leaders will follow." That's what MCCE is all about!

Sincerely,

ANDY

*Andrew Bossie,
Executive Director*

Introducing MCCE Action!

It's not news that the flood of money crowding out the voices of ordinary voters in elections is on the rise. So, we at MCCE are stepping up our efforts to do something about it. Please welcome our new advocacy arm: MCCE Action!

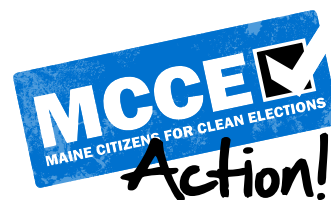
MCCE Action is a sister organization to MCCE that expands our capacity to mobilize people in support of strong campaign finance laws that put people first. Focusing on issue advocacy and grassroots organizing, MCCE Action will work to make sure that the voices of Maine people are heard.

Every day, we hear about how millions of dollars are being spent to determine the outcome of elections and influence our representatives once in office. Abetted by a series of damaging court rulings, big money special interests dominate the political sphere. It's no wonder that citizens question whether our elected leaders are capable of fixing this broken system and addressing the important issues of the day.

Solutions exist, if only our representatives would muster the political will to pass and implement them! MCCE Action will strengthen the

important ties between citizens and elected leaders, and together we will tackle this deep-rooted problem.

With MCCE providing research, education, and outreach, MCCE Action will mobilize citizens to advance policies that strengthen our democracy. To support MCCE Action, go to www.mainecelelections.org/donate. ■



Stand Up (from page 1)

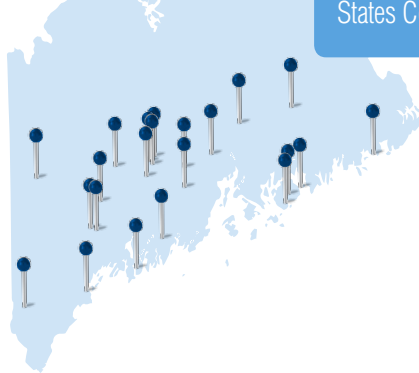
It has long been a core belief at MCCE that active, engaged citizens are the most important element of our democratic system. That's why it is so exciting to be a part of the growing grassroots movement toward a constitutional amendment. We are working with individuals and community groups all across Maine as well as organizations like Common Cause, Move to Amend, Free Speech for People, and Public Citizen.

MCCE is committed to working in the short term to identify ways to strengthen our current campaign finance laws. For the long term, we need to release the constraints of the current court precedent. We can only do this with a powerful mobilization of Maine people. Your help is crucial for this long-haul work to reinvigorate our democratic system and keep voters,

not money, at the heart of elections. Nothing could be more important! ■



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Program Director MCCE
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Towns that have passed resolutions

ARROWSIC
BANGOR
BAR HARBOR
BETHEL
FAIRFIELD
FREEDOM
GREAT POND

LEEDS
LEWISTON
LIBERTY
MONROE
MOUNT DESERT
NEWCASTLE
PORTLAND

ROQUE BLUFFS
SHAPLEIGH
SOUTHWEST HARBOR
VASSALBORO
VIENNA
WATERVILLE
WINSLOW

MCCE believes that U.S. Supreme Court rulings, beginning with *Buckley v. Valeo* and continuing through *Citizens United v. FEC* and others, have interpreted the First Amendment and its application to elections in such a way as to disproportionately elevate the role of wealthy special interests in elections and diminish the voices and influence of ordinary Americans.

We believe that the current legal landscape severely constrains the range of options available to correct these problems.

In order to reverse the effects of these decisions, to protect equal access to election "speech" for ordinary citizens, and to allow the American people to develop the tools they need for self-governance, MCCE supports a strategy to pass one or more amendments to the United States Constitution that would:

- Empower state and federal governments to regulate the raising and spending of funds in elections;
- Differentiate the spending of money in elections from other First Amendment activities;
- Clarify the nature of corporations and provide that state and federal governments have the ability to limit their participation in elections; and Protect freedom of the press.

Election (from page 1)

It's not enough to ask candidates whether they are financing their campaign with Clean Elections or with private funding. In the 125th Legislature many lawmakers who benefited from Clean Elections in their own campaigns cast votes to weaken the system for future candidates. Some even voted to repeal the law or eliminate Clean Elections in the race for governor. And today some strong Clean Election supporters are using private funding because the system simply does not provide adequate resources to run a competitive campaign in their district. That means voters must ask state candidates:

- Do you support full funding for Clean Elections in legislative and gubernatorial elections?
- Will you support PAC reform, including contribution limits to PACs?

Ask incumbents:

- Did you vote for the "requalifying option" to strengthen the Clean Election system? The "requalifying option" is a broadly supported replacement for the matching funds system that the legislature did not pass. It would have greatly increased the viability of the Clean Election system.

Federal candidates

Maine voters will fill Olympia Snowe's open U.S. Senate seat for the first time in 18 years. And voters will elect representatives to Congress in the First and Second Districts. After the record-breaking spending in this year's presidential and congressional campaigns, campaign reform is sure to be on the agenda for the 113th Congress when it convenes in January.

Before deciding who should represent Maine in Washington,

DC, voters must ask candidates where they stand. Specifically:

- Do you support the DISCLOSE Act to bring transparency to independent election spending?
- Do you support the Fair Elections Now Act to provide public funding in congressional races?
- Do you support a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United* and allow for effective campaign finance regulation, including a ban on corporate money in elections?

The future of reform

It is apparent that the ever-shrinking toolbox available to reform-minded lawmakers is insufficient to the job of reducing the influence of money in politics. As long as the Supreme Court interprets the First Amendment to mean that money is speech, and

corporations are people, the role of special interest money in our elections and in our government will increase.

That's why MCCE and allies across Maine and the nation are pursuing a constitutional amendment strategy – a strategy that will allow citizens to reverse the course set by the 5-member majority on our highest court (see *Maine Towns Stand Up*, page 1). The success of this long-term approach will rest on the willingness of citizens to engage in an ongoing dialogue with candidates during elections and with all those who represent us at every level of government.

Let's start today by letting every candidate know that we want a government "of, by, and for the people." That means we need a campaign finance system that puts people first. ■

Launched: Money in Politics Project

Money in politics is an issue of vital concern to Maine people because it goes to the heart of our democratic system. That's why MCCE launched the Money in Politics Project in June, releasing the first in a series of reports about the role and effect of money on Maine politics. Twelve reports, covering a range of campaign finance issues, will be published over the next year. Each combines a review of publicly available campaign finance data with on-the-ground analysis of how money influences Maine's elections, government, and public policy.

Report #1, PACs Unlimited: How Legislator PACs Distort Maine Politics, documents the flow of big money through political ac-

tion committees (PACs) controlled by legislators. These legislator PACs exist to advance personal interests and party agendas, and they provide a conduit for unlimited special interest contributions to run directly to legislative leadership. The report found that of the \$12 million that flowed through these PACs over the last decade, three-quarters came in donations of \$15,000 or more, while donations from individual giving \$50 or less made up less than 2% of the total.

Report #2, The Leader Board: Maine's Top Legislative Fundraisers and How They Earned Their Spots, published in July, profiles the top ten fundraisers among privately funded candidates over the last ten years. MCCE examined the size

Small Contributions Constitute a Tiny Fraction of the Fundraising by Caucus and Leadership PACs

Contributions
\$50 or less

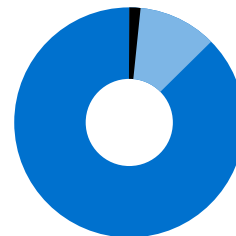
\$211K

Contributions
\$50-\$350

\$1,393K

Contributions
\$350+

\$10,967K



and source of donations, revealing three distinct styles of fundraising. Besides the wealthy self-funded candidates, there are those who rely heavily on large donations from corporations and political action committees, and others who raise money from a broad array of sources, including many individual donors.

Report #3, Money, Insurance, and Health Care Policy: How Health Insurance Companies' Campaign Contributions Helped

Them Win Major Legislation, released in October, examines the political donations made by health care interests over the ten-year period leading up to the enactment of Maine's controversial new health insurance law. This report found that more than \$1 million dollars was spent on campaign contributions to candidates and political action committees by those with powerful financial interests in both health insurance and health care. It also found that the company with the most to gain from the new law, Anthem/Wellpoint, dramatically changed its pattern of giving in 2010, the year Republicans swept state elections.

MCCE works in the public interest, and the Money in Politics Project is designed to tell the story of money in Maine politics and illustrate both the value and the limits of current campaign finance laws. We believe that voters are at the center of our political system, and understanding the flow of money and the role of special interests in elections is critical.

Find the full reports at www.mainecelelections.org.

CLIP & SAVE

Money in politics is THE issue of the 2012 elections! Ask candidates how they intend to reduce the influence of special interests.



☒ Ask all state candidates

- Do you support full funding for the Maine Clean Election Act in legislative and gubernatorial elections?
- Will you support PAC reform including contribution limits to PACs?

☒ Ask your legislators:

- Did you vote for the "requalifying option" to strengthen the Clean Election system?

☒ Ask all federal candidates:

- Do you support the Fair Elections Now Act to provide public funding in congressional races?
- Do you support the DISCLOSE Act to bring transparency to independent spending?
- Do you support a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United* and allow for effective campaign finance regulation, including a ban on corporate money in elections?

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INSIDE

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