



# Maine Clean Elections News

P.O. Box 18187, Portland, ME 04112

[www.mainecelelections.org](http://www.mainecelelections.org)

The Newsletter of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections • Vol. 2, Issue 1 • Summer 2009

## Maine Voters Want Candidates to Use Clean Elections

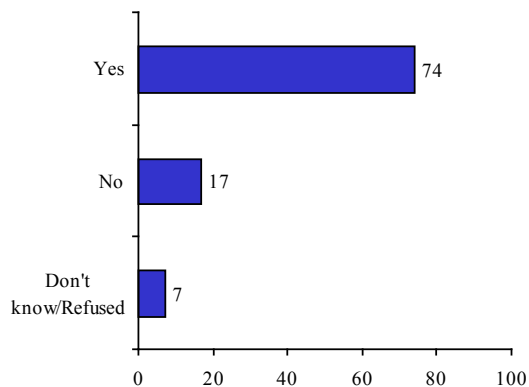
Maine voters solidly support the state's first-in-the nation Clean Elections system according to new poll results released in June by MCCE. Three out of four Maine voters say they want candidates for governor to use Maine's Clean Election law, and a majority say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who used the Clean Election system.

MCCE'S poll found that every major demographic group solidly favors Maine's Clean Election system, which provides qualified candidates with a limited amount of public funding if

they agree to take no large contributions and to curtail their total campaign spending. These results mirror those from a national poll commissioned by Common Cause to gauge public support for campaign finance systems that rely only on small private donations and limited public funding.

"The poll confirms that Maine people value the Clean Election system and the candidates who use it," said Alison Smith, co-chair of MCCE.

In the 2008 election, eighty-five



*Do you think candidates for governor should use Maine's Clean Election law, which provides public campaign funds for candidates who agree to spending limits and accept only small contributions from individuals?*

**See Poll - page 3**

## Clean Elections in the 124th Maine Legislature

The 124th Legislature adjourned after a grueling session during which the budget dominated all other issues. Our overarching goal at MCCE was to make sure that the Maine Clean Election Act (MCEA) emerged intact so that candidates for governor and for legislative seats in 2010 have a viable public funding option. We are happy to report that we met our goal.

It was clear from the first days of the session that there would be big challenges. The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs (LVA) heard dozens of campaign finance bills, some with direct attacks on the MCEA, including one that died in committee which would have eliminated the entire Clean Election program. Other bills, taken together, would have amounted to a "death by a thousand cuts."

With the help of both public tes-

timony and behind-the-scenes work by MCCE, the LVA Committee was able to sort the good ideas from the bad. While we did have some disappointments, we were pleased that on the most important issues, the Committee was able to vote out bills with unanimous Ought to Pass reports.

While the repeal bill did not get far, there was a serious effort to eliminate funding for the gubernatorial public funding system. Senator Gerry Davis introduced LD 921 to do just that. Some legislators saw this as a good way to free up several million dollars for other state programs, and many expressed the sentiment that the gubernatorial system does not work as well as the legislative system. Complaints heard were that it is too easy to qualify which might

allow marginal candidates to receive public financing, and that there is not enough money in the system up front for the strongest candidates to be competitive. In other words, some perceived it as being a system for losers and not a good use of public money. Obviously, that had to change.

Speaker of the House Hannah Pingree made it a priority to strengthen the system and make it more attractive to the strongest candidates by sponsoring LD 1380, An Act to Amend the Maine Clean Election Laws Governing Gubernatorial Candidates. This became the most important bill of the session; without it, we may well have lost the gubernatorial option. LD 1380 sets the bar significantly higher to qualify for Clean Election funding, and shifts distributions to give candidates in

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MCCE is a nonpartisan coalition of groups and individuals 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.

### Executive Director

Malory Shaughnessy

### Steering Committee Co-chairs

Ann Luther  
League of Women Voters of Maine

Alison Smith  
At Large

### Steering Committee Members

Harris Parnell  
League of Young Voters

Jesse Graham  
Maine People's Alliance/Maine  
People's Resource Center

Pam Cahill  
At Large

Joanne D'Arcangelo  
At Large

Arn Pearson  
Common Cause

Ben Grant  
Maine AFL-CIO

Jill Ward  
At Large

### Organizational Members

AARP Maine  
Common Cause Maine  
EqualityMaine  
League of Women Voters of Maine  
League of Young Voters  
Maine AFL-CIO  
Maine Council of Churches  
Maine People's Alliance/Maine  
People's Resource Center  
Maine Women's Lobby  
NAACP Portland  
Natural Resources Council of Maine  
Peace Action Maine

## Bringing Clean Elections to Congress

Candidates run for Congress on a host of different issues: health care, lower taxes, the environment... you name it. But no one runs for Congress in order to get themselves a permanent fundraising job – yet that is exactly what they get.

Representative Chellie Pingree, Maine's newest member of

Congress, spoke to Clean Election supporters at a recent gathering and explained that she and her fellow freshmen are quickly realizing that the system in place today will trap them in a perpetual money chase that takes way too much time away from legislative priorities. That's why Pingree is a proud co-sponsor of the Fair Elections Now Act (FENA).

Introduced by Senators Dick Durbin and Arlen Specter and U.S. Representatives John Larson and Walter Jones, the bill creates a voluntary system that puts a premium on small, in-state donations. Candidates who participate in the system would limit their campaign spending to the amounts raised from small-dollar donors plus matching contributions from the Fair Elections Fund. That means that \$100 from a Maine donor will be worth more than \$100 from a Washington lobbyist.

At the bill's introduction Pingree declared, "The ultimate solution to campaign finance reform is to provide public financing of campaigns. We've done it in Maine, and it's been very successful."

All over the country people are pointing to Maine as a beacon of hope as they lobby their national representatives to sign on to FENA. Since going into effect here in Maine, the Clean Election system has allowed more



Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree, co-sponsor of the Fair Elections Now Act

candidates to run, especially women; resulted in fewer uncontested races and more choices for voters; brought unparalleled parity between incumbents and challengers; and flattened the growth of campaign spending.

We must ask the rest of Maine's congressional delegation to get on board. **Please contact Maine's senators and Representative Michaud today and ask them to cosponsor the Fair Elections Now Act (S. 752 & H.R. 1285).** Tell them you are proud of Maine's pioneering Clean Election system, and that you want the same benefits for the United States Congress. Thank Rep. Pingree for her leadership on this important issue, too.

**Sen. Olympia Snowe**  
(202) 224-5344 or (800) 432-1599  
[www.snowe.senate.gov](http://www.snowe.senate.gov)

**Sen. Susan Collins**  
(202) 224-2523  
[www.collins.senate.gov](http://www.collins.senate.gov)

**Rep. Mike Michaud**  
(202) 225-6306  
[www.michaud.house.gov](http://www.michaud.house.gov)

**Rep. Chellie Pingree**  
(202) 225-6116  
or [www.pingree.house.gov](http://www.pingree.house.gov)

**For more information visit**  
[www.fairelectionsnow.org](http://www.fairelectionsnow.org)

## Thank You to Our Donors!

Our donors, both large and small, make our work possible and we want to acknowledge your generous support. Over the last six months, we have received major support from a component fund of the **Maine Community Foundation**, from the **Service Employees International Union**; from our long-time sponsor, the **Piper Fund**; and most recently, from **Maine Initiatives**. We are very grateful to all these grantors; without their support, our efforts would not be sustainable.

A very special thanks to all of our friends who made individual contributions to support MCCE. Since June of last year, we have received more than 150 **individual contributions totaling over \$19,000**. This is very nearly our largest single source of revenue. Donations ranged in amount from \$10 to \$6,000. Every single contribution, no matter the size, supports our vital mission and is greatly appreciated. **Thank you!**

## Poll (continued)

percent of current legislators used the Clean Election system. In the last gubernatorial election, several candidates used the system, but Governor Baldacci, the winning candidate, did not.

A majority of poll respondents also said they do not think the Clean Election program should be cut in order to fund other state programs. “Unfortunately, many state programs were trimmed this year, including Clean Elections,” said Ann Luther, co-chair of MCCE. “We are happy that the legislature rejected attempts to eliminate funding for the gubernatorial system opting instead to strengthen public funding to make it more viable for the strongest candidates in 2010.” Candidates in 2010 will find it more difficult to qualify for public funds, but those who do will have adequate resources to run a strong, competitive campaign.

Maine people want gubernatorial candidates they support to use public funding. Now it is up to the candidates!

## DONATE Today!

Join more than 150 Maine donors who support MCCE’s critical work.

Go to  
[www.mainelections.org](http://www.mainelections.org)  
 or mail a check to:  
 MCCE  
 P.O. Box 18187  
 Portland, ME 04112

## Letter From The Co-Chairs

Our mission has never been more vital. As our country wrestles with the enormous issues of the day, we also struggle to eliminate the barriers that stand in the way of change. Separating special interest money from our highest public offices is not just a lofty goal. It is fundamental reform that is essential to the success and strength of our democracy.

Maine’s Clean Election system continues to be a beacon of hope for reformers around the nation, and that’s why we take our work so seriously.

Since our last newsletter, MCCE held its first annual meeting with guest speaker Bob Schiff, Chief Counsel for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constitution. In his update on reform in the Capitol, Bob emphasized Maine’s importance to those efforts. Not only do we provide a successful working public funding model, but our two Senators are key to the success of federal reform of the presidential and congressional systems.

In other news, we hired Malory Shaughnessy as our new part-time Executive Director. Malory brings a wealth of experience in politics, public policy, community organizing, and issue advocacy, all of which will be a great help in this position. We also welcomed Equality Maine as an organizational partner. Both are terrific additions to our team.

At the same time, we reluctantly said good-bye to Jon Bartholomew who has taken a new job in Portland, Oregon. Jon served the Clean Election effort in many capacities, most recently representing Common Cause Maine on our Steering Committee. Finally, Jill Ward, our first part-time staff person, has moved on professionally but remains with MCCE in a new capacity as a volunteer member of our Steering Committee.

We proudly launched our new web site in January! Check out [www.mainelections.org](http://www.mainelections.org), and while you’re there, sign up for our email list, make a donation, and send us your comments.

Thanks for being a part of our growing team!

Ann Luther, co-chair



Alison Smith, co-chair



# Legislature (continued from page 1)

contested primary races more money initially and less in matching funds. It also raises the Seed Money cap so that candidates may raise and spend more small private donations from individuals, not PACs or businesses, before qualifying for public funds.

The tight state budget was foremost in the LVA Committee's discussions throughout the deliberations on LD 1380 and all other bills, and they found ways to both save money and increase voluntary revenue to the Clean Election program. As the LVA Committee reported out their final bills, the Appropriations Committee wrapped up their budget cutting nearly a half million dollars from Clean Elections and mandating that distribu-

tions to candidates be cut by 5% with an offset by private money. This move threatened to undermine the careful policy work done by the Committee, and it was only intense last-minute work that preserved the Committee's good changes, accommodating the budget cut while preserving the system's viability.

While every committee member worked hard on these sometimes complex issues, House Chair Pamela Jabar Trinward deserves special recognition. She took the lead on Clean Election legislation, working closely with Senate Chair Nancy Sullivan, committee members and leadership to facilitate a respectful and effective process.

One important bill that did not see the light of day was LD 583, "An Act Relating To Political Action Committees." This bill, for the first time, would have imposed

limits on the size of contributions to PACs in Maine. Despite otherwise excellent campaign finance statutes, the lack of any limit on contributions to candidate PACs sets us apart from all but a dozen other states. The failure of PAC reform is MCCE's biggest disappointment, and we are committed to continuing the fight despite this setback.

All in all, it was a long and busy session. MCCE prepared testimony on over two dozen Clean Elections bills, helping legislators on the LVA Committee weigh the consequences of many complex proposals, advocating in the public interest for the integrity of our public funding system. We are pleased that the LVA Committee and the Legislature as a whole has protected the viability of the Maine Clean Election Act through a very challenging legislative cycle.

## MAINE VOTERS WANT TO TAKE CLEAN ELECTIONS TO THE BLAINE HOUSE!

MCCE applauds the 124th Legislature for preserving and strengthening the Gubernatorial Clean Elections system.

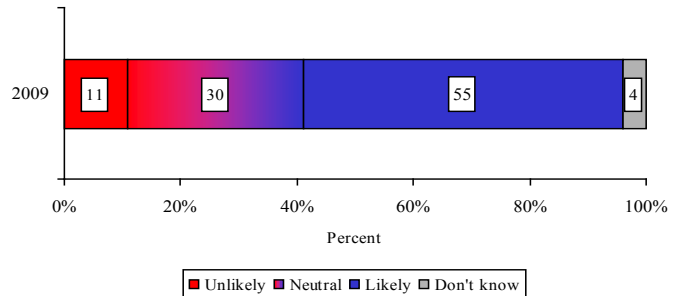
### TAKE ACTION NOW!

Call or write your legislators today\*:

- o Tell them you are proud of Maine's pioneering Clean Election system!
- o Thank them for voting to strengthen Maine's Gubernatorial Clean Election system!
- o Tell them to encourage candidates to use it!

\* Go online to [www.maine.gov/legis/house/townlist.htm](http://www.maine.gov/legis/house/townlist.htm)

See page one for more details...



Would you be more or less likely to vote for a candidate for governor who participates in Maine's Clean Elections program, which provides public campaign funds for candidates who agree to spending limits and swear off special interest contributions?

- Clean Elections Defended in the Maine Legislature
- The Latest Polling Results
- And Much More...

INSIDE:

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