

# MAINE CLEAN ELECTIONS NEWS

Summer 2021  
Volume 12 Issue 1



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@MECleanElection



## Support the For the People Act

By Alison Smith

Whatever our color, background or zip code, most of us believe that voters pick our leaders — our leaders do not pick their voters. When it comes to our elections, we want a trustworthy, transparent process, where Americans have equal freedom to vote, whether we live in a small town or big city, the south or the north.

But today, extremist politicians around the country are going to great lengths to build barriers that make it hard for some people to vote. It's time to enact national standards, which is why the For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1) is so important.

The For the People Act will protect our freedom to vote by making sure that voting options are equally accessible across all 50 states, make sure all voices are heard by preventing billionaires from buying our elections, and guarantee that congressional districts are drawn to provide fair representation for all.

It's not enough that we have excellent laws in Maine. All Americans deserve the freedom to vote, the chance to elect candidates who are not indebted to big donors, and to live in districts free of partisan gerrymandering. Many of its provisions, such as Election Day registration and public funding for qualified candidates, have been used successfully in Maine for decades and are



popular with voters all over the state and across the political spectrum.

In the 2020 elections we saw record turn-out and many innovative measures to keep voters and poll workers safe during the pandemic. Now we must move forward to lock in these fundamental freedoms — the right to vote and to be fairly represented.

Representatives Jared Golden and Chellie Pingree cosponsored the For the People Act, which passed in the House. Angus King is a cosponsor of the Senate bill, S. 1, but Susan Collins has not yet declared her position.

Please contact Senator Collins and ask for her support, and contact Senator King and Representatives Golden and Pingree to thank them for their support. A Senate vote is expected sometime this summer.

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# Candidates Supporting Municipal Clean Elections Win Majority of Seats on Portland Charter Commission

By Anna Kellar

Of the nine charter commissioners elected Tuesday, June 8, all nine have indicated their support for a municipal Clean Elections public funding system. Fair Elections Portland is looking forward to working with the charter commission to support the creation of a robust Clean Elections program for municipal candidates.

While the charter commission will take up a number of important structural questions, it was the demand for Clean Elections that triggered the charter revision process. In 2019, more than 6,800 Portland voters signed a petition in support of a charter amendment for a local campaign funding program modeled on the state's Maine Clean Elections Act.

The proposal easily qualified for the ballot in August 2019, but a divided City Council voted not to place it on the ballot and instead ordered a public vote on a charter commission. On July 15, 2020 more than 70% of voters approved opening the charter. Meanwhile, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court recently ruled that the City of Portland did not provide adequate justification for its refusal to place the Clean Elections proposal on the ballot. We expect the City to reconsider its earlier decision to block the measure, and we also anticipate that the Charter Commission will soon weigh in.

A publicly-funded Clean Elections program would give working-class people the means to run for office and represent their communities using small donations from constituents instead of large checks from wealthy donors.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## Meet our new board members:



**Kalie Hess**  
(she/her)

📍 Augusta

Kalie is a public health professional and has worked in community and statewide public health efforts in Maine. Her career has focused on health equity and improving health outcomes for underserved people in Maine — and so much of our health and wellbeing is political.



**Laura Christy Genese**  
(she/her)

📍 Falmouth

Laura is the Marketing and Communications Director for Girls Scouts of Maine. She served on the Steering Committee for the Maine Suffrage Centennial Collaborative, which inspired her to get more involved in advocating for voter rights.



**Joyce Maker**  
(she/her)

📍 Calais

Joyce is a retired college administrator. She has been an active member of her community serving on both the School Board and the Calais City Council and served in the House of Representatives and the Senate in the State of Maine.



**Melissa Hanley Murphy**  
(she/her)

📍 Scarborough

Melissa has been a member of LWVME since the 1980s when she moved to Maine after marrying a South Portland native, whom she met at the University of Michigan Law School, and joining Perkins Thompson, a Portland law firm.

# LD 1417

An Act Regarding Campaign Finance Reform.



## Becomes a law!

### Priority Bill: Banning All Corporate Contributions to Candidates and Their PACs

By John Brautigam

Corporations cannot make campaign contributions in U.S. Senate and Congressional races but give in Maine legislative and gubernatorial races. LD 1417 will close that loophole by banning corporate contributions to candidates for state office. It will take effect in 2023.

It will also ban corporations from giving to any PAC that is controlled by a candidate — often referred to as a “leadership PAC.” This bill will bring Maine in line with 22 other states and the federal system, preventing corporations from using their unique corporate form — and their ability to aggregate funds — to give directly to

people who may write the rules that govern those corporations. The bill allows corporate officers and employees to make contributions through a separate fund.

Thanks to Clean Elections, corporate money in Maine races is not overwhelming. But closing this loophole is overdue. The bill also includes the first contribution limits on PACs controlled by legislators. MCCE believes that contributors should not circumvent contribution limits meant to reduce the appearance of corruption by channeling unlimited contributions to a PAC rather than the same person’s campaign committee.

### Legislation to Ban Foreign Money

By John Brautigam

Concern over foreign involvement in democratic activities has boiled over in recent years, both nationally and in Maine.

Sparked partly by unprecedented spending on two citizen initiatives relating to the power corridor through western Maine, the legislature considered bills to restrict foreign spending in both candidate and ballot question campaigns, mirroring elements of the For the People Act (see PAGE 1), which include a federal ban on spending by foreign governments and corporations seeking to influence ballot questions.

As we go to press, that bill, LD 194, is headed to the governor’s desk.

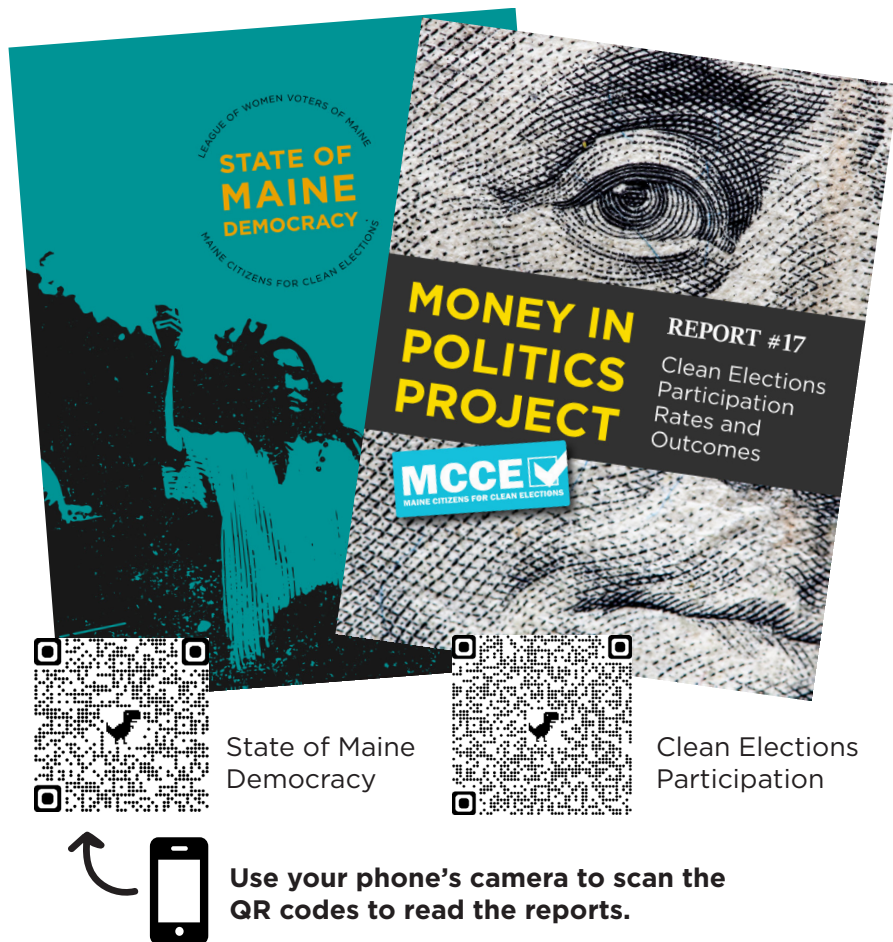
Foreign sources are already prohibited from contributing to candidates. One issue is whether a corporation that is partly foreign-owned but domiciled in the U.S. should be able to make contributions. *Citizens United* determined that corporations have speech rights because they are associations of citizens. CU did not decide whether a corporation that is an association of non-citizens should have the same rights. We support the personal and civil rights of non-citizens making a home here in Maine, but we want to prevent foreign governments and corporations with foreign allegiances from taking over our political discourse.

## Money in Politics Report #17

This spring, we released one report that offers a broad and objective perspective on Maine's Democracy and a second report that analyzed Clean Elections participation, covering the 2018 and 2020 legislative races.

Both reports highlight that Maine needs the continued success of Clean Elections. Getting big money out of politics creates a democracy that truly represents Maine people. Additionally, as the first state to create a public funding system, Maine has an important role to play in the national debate over how to reform our democracy.

Maine knows the success of Clean Elections. The MCEA program allows candidates to compete for office even if they object to the fundraising imperative or lack wealthy friends and contacts who could fuel their efforts. Many candidates have stepped forward and served distinguished careers. The innovative program also encourages issue-based campaigns maximizing direct contact between voters and candidates.



Support the For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1)  
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> INSIDE:



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