



Maine Clean Elections News

P.O. Box 18187, Portland, ME 04112

www.mainecelelections.org

The Newsletter of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections • Vol. 7, Issue 1 • Spring 2014

Citizens Lead: The Clean Elections Initiative

Nearly 20 years ago a group of Maine citizens came together to tackle the problems of big money in Maine elections. This group came up with the nation's first full public funding system for state offices—the Maine Clean Election Act.

That group took their idea and built a powerful movement in Maine. With eleven hundred volunteers, signatures were gathered to qualify the bill as a citizen-initiated referendum. In 1996, Maine voters enthusiastically approved the measure at the polls. In 2000, the first candidates used the brand-new system. That pioneering group amounted to just 30% of candidates, but with each cycle, the number grew, peaking at more than 80% in 2008.

Today, after a damaging Supreme Court decision, legislative action and inaction, and gubernatorial vetoes, our Maine Clean Election Act is weakened. It is no longer viable for many candidates. Participation has dropped

to the lowest level since that first year. Outside groups spent more to influence our elections in 2012 than all other candidate spending combined. And Maine is on track this year to have its most expensive elections in history.

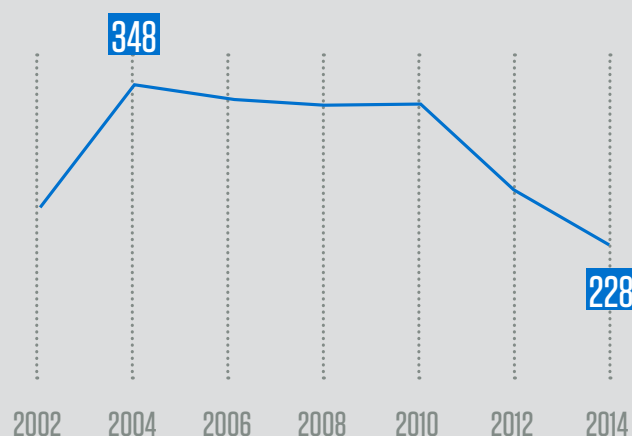
National trends are evident in Maine. Undisclosed dark money fuels campaign advertising, and deep-pocketed interests spend in Maine elections without always complying with our campaign finance laws. Penalties levied when the dust has settled, often long after the election, are considered a mere cost of doing business.

That is why Maine people have stepped up to launch a new Clean Election initiative that will strengthen Clean Elections, increase transparency, and bolster accountability.

And that's where you come in.

A citizens' initiative is not easy or without costs. We will succeed not just because Maine people believe in Clean Elections and want to strengthen the law,

Number of Publicly Funded Candidates Per Election Cycle



Clean Elections participation is declining, showing needed changes to strengthen the program.

but because Maine people step up to lead. We need to mobilize hundreds of Mainers to knock on doors, make phone calls, host fundraisers, and recruit friends, colleagues, family, and neighbors to the cause. Over the next eight

months, we need to collect more than 70,000 signatures from voters in communities across Maine. This requires energy, time, and leadership from all of us!

Initiative (continues page 2)

Federal Update

In a disappointing but unsurprising ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned yet another campaign finance law. The recent 5-4 decision in *McCutcheon v. FEC* eliminates the aggregate contribution limit—the cap on what any individual may donate to federal candidates, PACs and parties.

McCutcheon was a win for big money and a loss for everyone else. On free speech grounds, the Court's majority struck down a law aimed at limiting corruption. This is consistent with other recent rulings that

place a premium on unlimited spending, give short shrift to other First Amendment values, limit the concept of corruption to "quid pro quo" corruption, and dismiss concerns about the overall influence of big, special interest money in elections and in government.

The dissenting justices understand the problem with this narrow interpretation, and Justice Stephen Breyer challenged it in his dissent. "...the First Amendment advances not only the individual's right to engage in

Federal Update (continues page 4)



Maine people took to the streets in protest after the U.S. Supreme Court announced its 5-4 ruling in *McCutcheon v. FEC*. (Credit: Jason Pollin)



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.

Board of Directors

Ann Luther

President & Treasurer

Gary Friedmann

Vice President

Jill Ward

Secretary

Phil Bailey

Kris Clark

Jesse Graham

Alison Smith

Staff

Andrew Bossie

Executive Director

BJ McCollister

Program Director

Christopher Mills

Development Director

Doing Our Part

Dear Friends:

"If we lose control of our government, then we lose our ability to dispense justice and human kindness." Those are the words of the late Doris "Granny D" Haddock.

MCCE joined with SPACE Gallery to welcome actress Barbara Bates Smith and musician Jeff Sebens last month for a performance of "Go, Granny D!" a play about 90-year old Granny D's remarkable cross-country walk to advocate for campaign finance reform. The performance left us with a renewed commitment to do our part for a more fair, just, and equitable society.

In March, law professor, and MCCE friend, Lawrence Lessig held forth in a packed hall at USM, delivering an unforgettable talk about money in politics, the importance of Maine's continued leadership, and the necessity for all of us to step up as citizens to make sure that all elections are Clean Elections. Very inspiring!

Sincere thanks to Board member and longtime volunteer Kris Clark who helped put on both of these events. Working with a team, Kris planned, promoted, and raised money for the events, ensuring that MCCE will continue to provide engaging and inclusive educational programs.

Plans are in the works for our first Clean Election Convention, and I hope you will come!

It's in Waterville on May 17th. We'll combine inspiring speakers with hands-on skill building workshops to build our movement. Don't miss it!

With petitions for a new Clean Elections initiative arriving this spring, it's time for all of us to do our part for democracy. Join me and the rest of the MCCE team in this enormously important effort!

Thanks for all you do,



ANDY

Andrew Bossie

Executive Director

MCCE is a proud member of MaineShare. Support our work through payroll giving.

MaineShare



MCCE in Action in 2014

Top Left: BJ McCollister welcomes Lawrence Lessig to the University of Southern Maine (credit: Damon Loucks); Top Right: Supporters gather in Augusta for the 4th anniversary of Citizens United and predict record spending in 2014 (credit: The Portland Daily Sun); Bottom Right: Professor Lessig emphasizes Maine's leadership role in his talk about getting big money out of politics (credit: Damon Loucks); Bottom Left: Barbara Bates Smith and Jeff Sebens perform "Go, Granny D!" across Maine in April.



Initiative (from page 1)

Our road to victory will be paved by thousands of individual actions. Are you a notary? You can notarize other volunteers' petitions. Do you like to write? Your letters to the editor will spread the message to everyone in your town. Are you good at data entry? You can help us keep track of our progress. Do you like to have parties? Invite friends, and ask everyone to contribute what they can. Do you like to talk on the phone? Call your friends, and recruit more signature-gatherers.

We all know that a government of, by, and for the people is not some idealistic fantasy. In Maine, it's non-negotiable. It's time to reclaim our democracy; it's time to reclaim our place as a leader in the national money-out-of-politics movement. Each and every one of us has something to contribute.

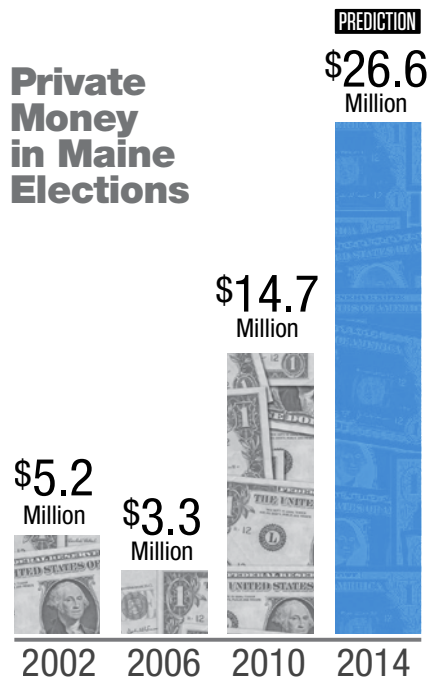
Twenty years ago, Mainers lived up to the motto "Dirigo." They led, not just Maine, but the nation, with the passage of Clean Elections. Today, a new generation of Maine citizens is poised to lead. Will you do your part for democracy? Will you join this extraordinary grassroots effort? ■

For more information contact BJ McCollister at bj@mainecleanelections.org or 207-831-6444.

2014 Campaign Spending Could Break Records

MONEY IN POLITICS

Private Money in Maine Elections



MCCE predicts more than \$26 million in private funds will be spent in this election cycle.

Fundraising in Maine's 2014 state elections is on track to break all records. The hotly contested gubernatorial race is garnering national attention—and money—and with six months remaining experts predict that this will be the most costly state election cycle in Maine history.

Based on current trends, overall spending could top \$26 million. This sum threatens to transform Maine's "retail" politics into a wholesale marketplace where national money tips the scales and elections are won by the deepest pockets and their allies.

With much more fundraising to go, the most recent reports show that candidates for governor are preparing for an intense blitz later this year. A great deal of the funding raised to date comes from individual contributors who are giving their candidate \$500, \$1,000, or even \$3,000. Commercial contributions and funds from the candidates' own bank accounts also contribute to the overall total.

And, in the nation's first Clean Election state, 100% of this gubernatorial funding is

private money. That's because, rather than strengthening the system after a damaging 2011 court decision, the legislature and governor have eliminated funding for gubernatorial candidates this year.

On the legislative side, candidates may still opt in to the Clean Election system, but because the matching funds system that was overturned by the court has not been replaced, many candidates find that the system is simply not viable in their race. That explains the dramatic drop-off in participation this year (See Cover Story). So, the trend of more private money in campaigns has spread to legislative races, too.

Only our Clean Election initiative can reverse this trend. By strengthening Clean Elections, increasing transparency, and bolstering accountability, this initiative restores our first-in-the-nation full public funding program. That's the only way to combat the growing role of private money in our elections. ■

New at MCCE: The Marion Holshouser Money in Politics Internship Program

Three years ago, MCCE lost a good friend. Marion Holshouser was one of our founders, and when she died at age 89, it marked the end of an era. Recently, her family decided to honor Marion's legacy with a gift to MCCE, and the result is our new Marion Holshouser Money in Politics Internship program!

Marion was a passionate believer in the democratic process and an active and informed participant. In addition to voting and being involved with her party, she ran for and served as City Councilor and City Treasurer in Urbana, Illinois.

She also believed deeply in the value of nonpartisan political work and was a longtime member of the League of Women Voters, both in Illinois and here in Maine where she and her husband retired. She worked tirelessly on League initiatives and received many awards for her

service and accomplishments.

When the Clean Election movement began in Maine, Marion was there, representing the League of Women Voters of Maine. Through several years she helped shape the law, build the coalition, and advocate for Clean Elections. In a lifetime of achievements, the passage of Clean Elections was among her most proud.

Marion was also a teacher. That's how she started her career, and she went on to work her way up through administrative positions at the University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. In retirement, the educator in Marion was always present, and all of us who were privileged to work with her benefited. She was a great booster of the young people she worked with, and she always encouraged her women colleagues to push forward and take risks in order to

make a difference in the world.

Now a new generation of future leaders will have a chance to work with MCCE and move Marion's work forward. Our Marion Holshouser interns will get hands-on experience with education, outreach, and community organizing while gaining an understanding of the constitutional, legal, and political challenges inherent in campaign reform. They will play crucial roles in our Clean Election initiative as we mobilize Mainers in communities all over the state.

We are delighted and honored to be able to pay tribute to Marion and carry on her legacy in such an appropriate way. The first applications have come in, and we encourage all of our supporters to spread the word to students they know. We look forward to having our first Marion Holshouser interns on



Marion Holshouser at the 10th anniversary celebration of Clean Elections in November 2010.

board this summer!

Marion's daughter, Judy Tizón, an educator herself, helped us shape this program. Sincere thanks to Judy, Eric Holshouser and Donna Stinson for providing this wonderful opportunity. ■

For more information go to www.mainecelelections.org/ intern or contact BJ McCollister at bj@mainecelelections.org or 207-831-6444.

Federal Update (from page 1)

political speech, but also the public's interest in preserving a democratic order in which collective speech matters ... Where enough money calls the tune, the general public will not be heard."

Meanwhile, in the House and Senate, our elected officials have reengaged the fight for public funding of elections. The Government by the People Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. John

Sarbanes (D-MD), and both Rep. Chellie Pingree and Rep. Mike Michaud signed on as co-sponsors. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) reintroduced the Fair Elections Now Act in the Senate, but neither of Maine's senators have signed on in support.

Senator Angus King responded to the McCutcheon ruling with the introduction of a bill to increase transparency. The Real Time Transparency Act of 2014

would modernize disclosure and give voters more information before elections.

Reformers agree that transparency is essential. Not only does the public need to understand who pays for the ads they see and hear in elections, but it is the only way to ensure that candidates, parties, PACs and others comply with other campaign finance laws.

But, transparency by itself is not enough. Being able to trace

the millions that flow through campaigns does nothing to reduce its influence. Only public funding provides an alternative to the private money system on which all Members of Congress depend. The reform community nationwide will push forward on Clean Election-style bills to raise the importance and value of small donations and high participation by a broad cross-section of the American people. ■

https://www.maineckanelections.org

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE UPDATES

Do you agree that everyone—not just the wealthy—needs a voice in elections?

Do you want to keep the power of government in the hands of the people?

Do you want to make sure that the people we elect are accountable to us?

Democracy Wants You!

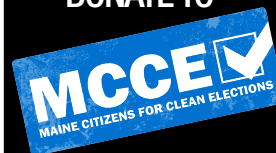
We are building a movement to make this happen, and we need you!

Join us on the Clean Election initiative! Together we will strengthen Clean Elections, increase transparency, and bolster accountability. *We'll make our democracy work!*

Contact us if you will:

- ☒ Collect signatures
- ☒ Make phone calls
- ☒ Recruit volunteers
- ☒ Lead signature efforts at polls on Election Day
- ☒ Write a Letter to the Editor
- ☒ Help with data entry
- ☒ Host a house party

Contact BJ McCollister at bj@maineckanelections.org or 207-831-6444 to sign up.

DONATE TO**TODAY!**

Visit us online or mail a check



maineckanelections.org

MCCE
PO Box 18187
Portland, ME 04112

INSIDE

- Clean Election Initiative
- Federal Update
- Record Spending Predicted in 2014
- New Internship Program
- Honors Founder

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

P.O. Box 18187
Portland, ME 04112

