



Maine Clean Elections News

P.O. Box 18187, Portland, ME 04112

www.mainecelelections.org

The Newsletter of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections • Vol. 6, Issue 1 • Spring 2013

Maine People Fight Proposed Clean Election Cuts

“For the sake of a functioning democracy, we must continue to push back on big money in politics ... we can’t afford to give up.” — Ann Luther

If Governor Paul LePage has his way, there will be no Clean Election option in 2014. The governor has proposed cutting \$4 million from the Maine Clean Election Fund in the biennial budget currently under consideration in August.

In a strong demonstration of support for Clean Elections 45 Mainers showed up to a March 20th hearing on the budget. Fifteen citizens rose to address the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs to protest the cuts. No one spoke in favor of the governor’s plan.

Gary Friedmann, a Bar Harbor town councilor, emphasized that the law was put into

place by voters who wanted to strengthen Maine’s democracy. “We’re here to say that we drafted this law, we voted for this law, we put funding in place for this law, and we want this law to continue to be strong and fully funded,” said Friedmann, who serves on MCCE’s Board of Directors. “We want to move forward with a government of, by, and for the people, not backwards by granting wealthy and special interest donors more influence in our statehouse. Stand up to the penny-wise, pound-foolish calls to gut Clean Elections, and work to continue this system, which leads the nation in preserving our democracy.”

Bill Curren, a senior at the University of Southern Maine, told the committee what Clean Elections means to young people. He said, “Our Clean Election system has shaped Maine’s unique political landscape for our young voters and future leaders. We do not want a future where politicians view big money as the only way to get elected.” Curren lives in South Portland and is an intern at MCCE.

Other speakers focused on the benefits of Clean Elections, such as the opportunity

“Maintaining a strong Clean Election system is essential for preserving and protecting our people, our state, and our democratic process.”

— Sam Jones



Sam Jones, a volunteer with Maine Conservation Voters, addresses the VLA and Appropriations Committee about Clean Elections budget cuts

it provides for candidates who are thinking about running for office. For example, Carmen Lavertue quoted a study showing that for 84% of female candidates the Clean Election option was an important factor in their decision to run for office.

Cuts (continues page 4)

Legislative Update: Putting Maine Voters First!

MCCE is hard at work on three priority bills during the current legislative session. In addition to these bills, MCCE monitors all campaign finance bills and the budget process.

1.L.D. 1309, “An Act to Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act.” Sponsored by Sen. Ed Youngblood (R-Penobscot).

The 125th Maine Legislature failed to replace the Clean Election matching funds system after it was eliminated due to a U.S.

Supreme Court decision. This bill offers the 126th the chance to do the job by boosting the viability of the Clean Election system in both legislative and gubernatorial elections. It replaces matching funds with a system of optional supplemental funding for participating Clean Election candidates who collect additional Qualifying Contributions. It also establishes new baseline initial distribution amounts.

There was diminished participation in Clean Elections because of the damage done in the last biennium, and to turn things

around we need pragmatic legislation to strengthen our citizen-initiated law. This bill enjoys bipartisanship support and is cosponsored by several legislative leaders including the co-chairs of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, which has oversight over campaign finance bills.

For this proposal to be fully implemented, voter-approved funding must be restored and sustained. Gov. LePage has proposed gutting Clean Election funds in his budget (see related story).

Update (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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Citizens Step Up to Make Our Democracy Strong

Dear Friends,

Justice Louis Brandeis said, "The most important political office is that of the private citizen." We agree. Here at MCCE we rely on the many private citizens who step up to make our democracy strong.

MCCE and 150 Clean Election supporters kicked off 2013 with Citizens Unite Against *Citizens United*, a State House rally to mark the anniversary of that notorious Court ruling. The 2012 election showed that the influx of outside money in campaigns – money that was unleashed by *Citizens United* – is here to stay, unless Americans take steps to roll it back. Mainers rallied for a U.S. Constitutional Amendment to do just that, and many took the time to lobby their own legislators.

We are happy to welcome three new members to our Board of Directors. Kris Clark of Portland is a community activist and long-time MCCE volunteer who excels at organizing events. Gary Friedmann of Bar Harbor is a nonprofit consultant and leader in the movement to pass municipal resolutions in support of a U.S. Con-

stitutional Amendment. Nolan Reichl of Cape Elizabeth is a litigator with a passion for politics and campaign finance.

Sadly, we said goodbye to Ralph Johnston of Windham, an extraordinary citizen who died this spring at age 92. Ralph was active in his community and ran a vigorous race for the State House last fall, but we will remember him as a champion of Clean Elections. Ralph was the very first of our supporters to sign up as a monthly contributor, and we are grateful for the confidence he had in our work.

We hope we can count on your active citizenship in the coming year! As you will read throughout this newsletter, both challenges and opportunities abound.

Sincerely,



ANDY

Andrew Bossie
Executive Director

A Thank You and a Special Opportunity!

Thanks are due to Jeff Clements, co-founder of Free Speech for People and author of *Corporations Are Not People*. Jeff headlined several events for us, including a fundraiser. **Make a gift of \$250 or more and receive a complimentary copy of Jeff's book.** Contact Andrew Bossie at 207-831-6223 or andrew@maineclipselections.org for more information.



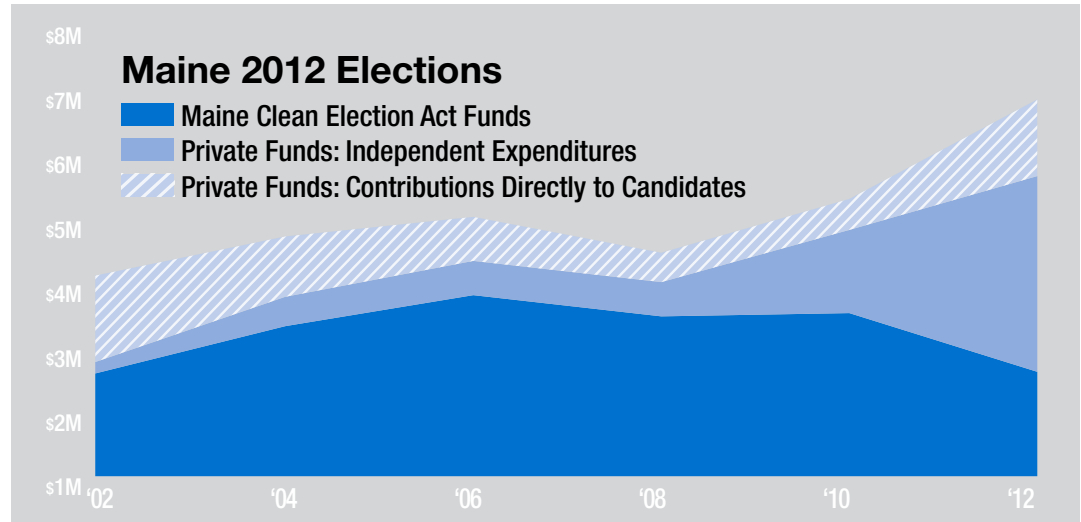
Private Money Surges in Maine Elections

By John Brautigam

MCCE's Money in Politics Project continues its reporting series on the influence of money in our elections with *Tracking the Money: Private Money Surges in Maine's 2012 Legislative Races*. This is our sixth report analyzing the money in Maine elections and government.

Our research team analyzed all the money contributed to candidates, political action committees (PACs), and political party committees in the 2012 election. We found a startling explosion of independent expenditures in 2012, which for the first time exceeded all candidates' spending (an independent expenditure is spending by individuals, groups, political committees, corporations or unions that expressly advocates for the election or defeat of clearly identified candidates). Also, for the first time since the early days of the Clean Elections program, the total amount of private money in legislative races surpassed public funding.

The report found that many entities with a vested interest in the decisions of the 126th Legislature were generous contributors. The business sector gave \$1.9 million, while the labor sector gave \$1.1 million. PACs aligned with both of the major political parties helped fuel over



\$3 million in independent expenditures targeted to impact a handful of the closest legislative races. Public money from the Maine Clean Election Fund made up less than 20% of the funding spent in legislative races.

Lobbyists and their employers also played the contribution game. Over \$1.4 million was given by entities with one or more registered lobbyists, helping to secure their access and influence among the lawmakers.

A total of 1,276 contributors gave at least \$350 – the maximum amount allowed in one election. The contributions from maxed-out donors made up over 48% of the private money raised.

The report also revealed that the finance/insurance/real estate sector contributed more than any

other business category in 2012. These well-heeled contributors represent health insurance companies, banks, real estate developers, brokers, and others who keep a close eye on legislation each session.

The 2012 election cycle turned into a dramatic battle for control of both the Maine House and Senate, with Democratic and Republican parties and PACs turning to their labor and business constituencies respectively for support. The rising tide of money in Maine would not have been possible but for increased funding from national organizations and PACs.

Recent court decisions, especially *Citizens United*, opened the spigots for secret private money at all levels of politics. The 2012

election shows that Maine is not immune from this trend. At the same time, the Maine Clean Election system was weakened by a court decision and legislative action, diminishing its viability during the 2012 cycle. These factors contributed to the drastic and unfortunate rise in the relative importance of private money in Maine elections.

The Money & Politics Project will continue to report on the role and effect of money on Maine politics. It is an issue that goes to the heart of our democratic system. ■

John Brautigam is MCCE's Money in Politics Team Leader. Find the full report at <https://www.maineckanelections.org/mip>.

Update (from page 1)

2.L.R. 66, "Joint Resolution Memorializing Congress to Pass a Constitutional Amendment to Reverse the Ruling of the U. S. Supreme Court in "Citizens United v. FEC". Sponsored by Sen. Dick Woodbury (U-Cumberland).

This memorial would put the 126th Maine Legislature on record in support of a U. S. Constitutional Amendment on campaign finance and would call upon Maine's delegation to support such an amendment in Congress. The intent of the amendment is to undo the damage done by U. S. Supreme

Court decisions, including *Citizens United v. FEC*, that have elevated the role of money in our elections while diminishing the voices of everyday people. The amendment would make clear that regulating the raising and spending of money in elections is allowable. In January, MCCE and more than 150 Mainers rallied in support of this resolution at a State House rally marking the anniversary of *Citizens United*.

3.L.D. 1271, "An Act To Increase Transparency in Reporting of Party Committees, Political Action Committees and Ballot Question Committees." Sponsored by Rep. Michael Carey (D-Lewiston).

This is a comprehensive campaign finance disclosure bill aimed at enhancing the information available to voters prior to an election, increasing compliance with disclosure laws, and, for the first time, regulating the money raised and spent by governors-elect for transition and inaugural activities. With the rise of secret money in elections, the time is right to let more sunshine into campaign spending. ■

We're counting on you to contact your representative and senator about these bills! Please contact BJ McCollister for more information at BJ@maineckanelections.org or 207-831-6444, or visit: www.maineckanelections.org/all-state-action.

Cuts (from page 1)

Lucas Desmond of Portland cautioned that eliminating Clean Elections would cause problems. "By defunding Clean Elections, we are inviting corruption, discouraging political participation and ensuring our candidates curry favor with wealthy special interests instead of the people of Maine."

Sam Jones of Phippsburg, an environmental advocate and retired lawyer, said that special interest money was a big factor in Ohio's legislative races. "I am convinced that how we

finance our campaigns is crucial in determining the strength of our democracy. And it takes a strong democracy to stand up to people and their companies who would benefit from unregulated

"We do not want a future where politicians view big money as the only way to get elected."

— Bill Curren

water and air pollution, unwise development and unsafe consumer products." He concluded, "Maintaining a strong Clean Election system is essential for preserving and protecting our people, our state, and our democratic process."

Speaking for the League of Women Voters of Maine, Ann Luther stated that Maine needs Clean Elections now more than ever. To make her case, she cited the dramatic wealth gap that exists in the United States, and the "representational inequality" that results from a federal campaign finance system that relies on large

donations from the wealthy. Luther concluded, "For the sake of a functioning democracy we must continue to push back on big money in politics. This may be a never-ending endeavor, but we can't afford to give up." ■

The message sent by these citizens is unequivocal: Maine people want a robust, fully funded Clean Election system. Sweeping the statutory funding for Clean Elections into other state programs is an affront to the voters who created the law and whose constant engagement has made it a success.

**ON THE ROAD WITH**

Democracy's Crisis in Confidence

MCCE has developed a terrific educational presentation to engage and empower people across the state of Maine on the issue of money in politics. *Money in Politics: Democracy's Crisis in Confidence* was launched at the University of Southern Maine in March, and now we've taken it on the road!

We aim to reach as many Maine citizens as possible through community events, living room conversations, and organizational meetings. MCCE is currently scheduling presentations at Rotary Clubs and other civic groups

as well as informal gatherings of friends and neighbors.

Money in Politics: Democracy's Crisis in Confidence is made possible by our many funders, especially the Emanuel & Pauline A. Lerner Foundation. ■

MCCE wants to come to your town!

Please contact BJ McCollister at BJ@MaineCleanElections.org or 207-831-6444 for more information and to get on the schedule.

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- Legislative Update: Putting Maine Voters First!
- Private Money Surges in Maine Elections
- Democracy's Crisis in Confidence

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