Maine Voter Preference Study
Summary Report of Findings
April 2010
Prepared for:
Report of Findings
Introduction
Background

- Maine Citizen’s For Clean Elections (MCCE) is in the process of evaluating the degree of disclosure that voters in Maine prefer regarding campaign financing.
- As a component of this evaluation, MCCE commissioned Critical Insights of Portland, a nonpartisan public policy polling firm, to conduct a strategic public opinion research effort to gauge voter reaction to a number of issues surrounding campaign funding, disclosure, and privacy.
  - This report summarizes results from this research effort, conducted in April of 2010.
Methodological Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Dates Research Conducted</th>
<th>Error Margin (each sample)</th>
<th>Initial Refusal Rate</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>402</td>
<td>April 9 to April 16, 2010</td>
<td>+/-4.1</td>
<td>+/-4.9</td>
<td>&lt; 3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A survey instrument of approximately 13 minutes in administrative length was developed by Critical Insights in collaboration with the project team.
- Eligible participants for the survey were required to be registered, “active” voters residing in Maine who self-reported that they are registered and planned to vote in the upcoming statewide election in November of 2010.
  - Data was statistically balanced according to relevant demographic dimensions to be reflective of recent voter turnout in Maine; a summary of the demographic profile of the sample appears later in this report.
- All interviews were conducted by telephone and coordinated from the Critical Insights Information Center in Portland, employing a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.
- Initial refusal rates for the study were less than 3% across the entire statewide sample, indicating a high level of engagement and the absence of any overt non-response bias.
Sample Profile
Voter Party Affiliation

In what political party are you registered to vote?

- Independent: 26%
- Democrat: 33%
- Republican: 31%
- Other: 4%
- Don't know/Refused: 6%
Political Philosophy

Thinking about your political leanings, would you say you are…?

- Very conservative: 25%
- Somewhat conservative: 22%
- Neither: 19%
- Somewhat liberal: 19%
- Very liberal: 9%
- Don’t know/Ref.: 6%
Political Donations

In a typical election year, about how much have you given in the form of political donations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0/Nothing</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1 to $50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51 to $100</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$101 to $250</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$251 to $500</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $500</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondent Gender and Age

- Male: 47%
- Female: 53%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 34</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and older</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the highest level of education you have completed?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school or less</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated high school</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Vocational/Community College</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated college</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or refused to specify</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which of the following categories best describes your total household income before taxes last year?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or refused to specify</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Results
Views on Laws Pertaining to Political Donations
Views on Laws Pertaining to Political Donations

• Fully 7-in-10 registered voters polled said that Maine laws requiring public disclosure of political donations and spending are “very important.”
  – Another one-fifth of respondents stated the laws are “somewhat important,” while very few respondents feel they are “not at all important” (5%).
  – Notably, respondents most likely to view campaign funding laws as “very important” are those who give the most in yearly political donations ($100 or more), and those not affiliated with any party.

• Among respondents who believe that State laws requiring reporting of political donations are important, the most frequently cited reason was, “It is important that people know.”
  – Other reasons cited for the importance of political donation laws include limiting the influencing or buying of politicians, accountability and honesty, and a need for transparency.

• Although very few respondents find the political campaign laws unimportant, the most commonly reported explanation was that they simply “don’t care.”
Importance of Laws Requiring Reporting of Most Political Donations

As we head into another election season, there has been some discussion in the state about what information is available to voters and how people learn about campaign issues. We are very interested in your thoughts on this topic.

The State of Maine has laws that require most political donations and spending to be reported. In general, how important do you think those laws are?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/Ref</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And why do you say that? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important that people know</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will limit influencing and buying politicians</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability/Honesty</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need transparency/Too many loopholes</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on those claiming that laws are “very important”; n=285. Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.
Importance of Laws Requiring Reporting of Most Political Donations

As we head into another election season, there has been some discussion in the state about what information is available to voters and how people learn about campaign issues. We are very interested in your thoughts on this topic.

The State of Maine has laws that require most political donations and spending to be reported. In general, how important do you think those laws are?

And why do you say that? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important that people know</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t read them anyway/Not important/Don’t care</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will limit influencing and buying politicians</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need transparency/Too many loopholes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like politics/Don’t trust politicians</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on those claiming that laws are “somewhat important”; n=91. Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.
Importance of Laws Requiring Reporting of Most Political Donations

As we head into another election season, there has been some discussion in the state about what information is available to voters and how people learn about campaign issues. We are very interested in your thoughts on this topic.

The State of Maine has laws that require most political donations and spending to be reported. In general, how important do you think those laws are?

And why do you say that? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t read them anyway/Not important/Don’t care</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like politics/Don’t trust politicians</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be kept private/Nobody’s business</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need transparency/Too many loopholes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on those claiming that laws are “not at all important”; n=20. Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted. Due to the small number of responses, figures represent actual numbers rather than percent.
Perceived Importance of Political Communications
Perceived Importance of Political Communications

- Among registered voters polled, the most important aspect of political communications is knowing whether people or groups contributing to a Maine political campaign stand to gain financially from the result of the election.
  - Indeed, fully 9-in-10 respondents indicate that knowing whether political campaign contributors will benefit financially is “somewhat” or “very important” to them.

- While the majority still find them important, respondents place less salience on advertisements compared to other types of political communications tested.
  - Specifically, two-thirds of those surveyed indicate that ads are important in helping inform voters before an election.
    - Interestingly, the value placed on ads as a means of informing voters is significantly higher among respondents whose political leanings are conservative and those affiliated with the GOP.
    - By contrast, ads hold significantly less importance to those with liberal political leanings and who have Democratic or no party affiliation.
Perceived Importance of Various Aspects of Political Communications

*I am going to read you a series of statements about political communications such as advertising or campaign mail and ask you to tell me how important various aspects of these communications are to you personally.*

How important is it to you to know if the people, corporations, or other groups who are contributing to a political campaign in Maine stand to gain financially from the result of that election?

For ads that are paid for by a group or organization, how important is it that you know who finances that group or organization?

If a political action committee or other group pays for ads, how important is it to know who is behind that group, for example, who are its leaders and decision-makers?

In deciding whether to rely on these ads, how important is it that you know who is paying for these campaign ads?

![Bar chart showing perceived importance of various aspects of political communications](chart.png)
Perceived Importance of Various Aspects of Political Communications

*I am going to read you a series of statements about political communications such as advertising or campaign mail and ask you to tell me how important various aspects of these communications are to you personally.*

- How important is it to know the size of financial contributions that individuals, corporations, and other groups make to organizations that pay for political communications?
  - Very important: 65%
  - Somewhat important: 20%
  - Slightly important: 6%
  - Not at all important: 8%

- How important is it to you to know whether or not those who pay for political communications in Maine are from Maine or are from out of state?
  - Very important: 64%
  - Somewhat important: 19%
  - Slightly important: 6%
  - Not at all important: 10%

- Thinking about candidate campaigns, how important is it to know whether a particular communication is paid for by the candidate’s own campaign or by someone else?
  - Very important: 61%
  - Somewhat important: 24%
  - Slightly important: 4%
  - Not at all important: 9%

- How important are campaign communications such as ads in helping you to become more informed before you vote?
  - Very important: 33%
  - Somewhat important: 30%
  - Slightly important: 13%
  - Not at all important: 22%

Legend:
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
Views on Campaign Communications
Views on Campaign Communications

• When asked which statement most closely represents their personal point of view, the vast majority of registered voters responding to the survey indicate that political campaign communications are misleading (79%), while only about 1-in-10 said they trust the communications from the media (TV, radio, newspaper).
  – Those who are unenrolled in any party or describe themselves as “Independent" are more likely to feel that communications are misleading than respondents associated with other political parties.

• Overall, respondents tend to favor transparency over confidentiality in terms of political campaign communications.
  – Indeed, more than 8-in-10 voters surveyed feel it is important for them to know who pays for political campaign communications, and that making the names of political donors public is important in keeping the process open.
  – About three-quarters of respondents said that knowing who pays for a political advertisement – and specifically who is behind the group or organization – helps them determine its credibility.
    • Respondents with liberal political leanings were generally more likely than others to favor statements pertaining to open communications.
I am going to read you two different statements that talk about how campaign communications efforts are paid for.

Listen carefully, then tell me which ONE comes closest to your own personal point of view:
Views on Communications

I am going to read you two different statements that talk about how campaign communications efforts are paid for.

Listen carefully, then tell me which ONE comes closest to your own personal point of view:

In general, I am not particularly interested in knowing who paid for the political campaign communications I see or hear.

In general, I feel it is important to know who paid for the political campaign communications I see or hear.

Don't Know/Refused
Views on Communications

I am going to read you two different statements that talk about how campaign communications efforts are paid for.

Listen carefully, then tell me which ONE comes closest to your own personal point of view:

- I believe that having the names of donors to political organizations available to the public is important because it keeps the process open and transparent. (80%)
- I believe that contributors should be able to donate confidentially to whatever political cause they want. (15%)
- Don't Know/Refused. (5%)
Views on Communications

I am going to read you two different statements that talk about how campaign communications efforts are paid for.

Listen carefully, then tell me which ONE comes closest to your own personal point of view:

- Knowing who pays for a political message helps me decide whether or not it’s believable (78%)
- I don’t pay any attention to who pays for a political message in deciding whether or not it is believable (19%)
- Don't Know/Refused (3%)
Views on Communications

I am going to read you two different statements that talk about how campaign communications efforts are paid for.

Listen carefully, then tell me which ONE comes closest to your own personal point of view:

- In thinking about whether to rely on information from a political ad, knowing the name of the group or organization who has paid for that political advertising, such as “Citizens for Freedom and Justice” is enough for me.
- If a group called Citizens for Freedom and Justice has paid for political advertising, I need to know who controls that group in deciding whether to rely on the advertising.
- Don't Know/Refused

Percent

0 20 40 60 80 100

24

73

3
Agreement/Disagreement with Political Communications
Agreement/Disagreement with Political Communications

• When asked to express agreement or disagreement in terms of specific political campaign communications, respondents once again tend to support open communications.
  – Fully 9-in-10 voters polled agree that, regardless of whether they would personally use the information, it is important that the names of political action groups paying for political communications be publicly available.
  – Additionally, more than 8-in-10 respondents agree that the names of donors to political action groups should be available to the public, as well as who specifically controls a group or organization.

• Conversely, only 17% of respondents agree that it is important for political campaign donors to remain confidential.

• The difference in opinions about the size of political contributions being made public was less extreme, with 39% of voters surveyed agreeing that it is not important vs. 56% who disagree.
  – Similarly, 39% of those polled agree that knowing the identity of contributors would not affect their opinion or how they vote, while 58% disagree.
Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Whether or not I would personally use such information, it is important that the names of individual, group, or corporate donors to political action groups are publicly available.
Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Whether or not I would personally use such information it is important that the names of political action groups that pay for the political communications are publicly available.
Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

It is not important to me that the size or amount of contributions to political action groups be available to the public.
Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Statements on ads indicating that a certain candidate ‘approved’ the messages in the ad make for more honest communications.
Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Knowing the identity of individuals and organizations that contribute money to political campaigns would not affect what I think or how I would choose to vote.
Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

I think the names of organizations or groups that contribute to political campaigns can be unclear, so I think it is important to know who controls the group.
Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

It is important for donors to have their political campaign donations be confidential.
Summary Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Whether or not I would personally use such information, it is important that the names of political action groups that pay for the political communications are publicly available.

Whether or not I would personally use such information, it is important that the names of individual, group, or corporate donors to political action groups are publicly available.

I think the names of organizations or groups that contribute to political campaigns can be unclear, so I think it is important to know who controls the group.

Statements on ads indicating that a certain candidate “approved” the messages in the ad make for more honest communications.

[Bar charts showing percentage agreement and disagreement]
Summary Agreement/Disagreement with Issues of Political Communication

Maine has laws that generally require political contributions and spending to be reported. A state agency uses these reports to keep track of information such as who gives, how much is given, and how the money is spent. That information is available to the public. I am going to read you a series of statements about political campaign communications and ask you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that point of view.

Knowing the identity of individuals and organizations that contribute money to political campaigns would NOT affect what I think or how I would choose to vote.

It is NOT important to me that the size or amount of contributions to political action groups be available to the public.

It is important for donors to have their political campaign donations be confidential.
Perceived Importance of Disclosure vs. Confidentiality
Perceived Importance of Disclosure vs. Confidentiality

• Consistent with findings noted throughout this report, when asked to choose which of two opposing statements is the most important, the majority of voters surveyed place higher importance on public knowledge than on donor confidentiality.
  – Specifically, 81% of respondents feel that the ability of the public to know who contributes financially to political campaigns is important, while only 14% place more importance on the ability of donors to keep their contributions confidential.
  – Likewise, more than three-quarters of those polled indicate that greater disclosure of political donations to assure integrity of the election process is important, vs. 15% who feel that greater anonymity is important to protect donors’ privacy.
Trade-Off

I’m going to read you two opposing statements regarding some of the issues we’ve been discussing. Listen carefully, then choose the ONE which is most important to you…
Trade-Off

I’m going to read you two opposing statements regarding some of the issues we’ve been discussing. Listen carefully, then choose the ONE which is **most important to you**…

![Bar chart showing responses to the statements]

Greater disclosure concerning donations to political causes in order to assure integrity of the election process: 78%

Greater anonymity concerning donations to political causes in order to protect donors’ privacy: 15%

Don't Know/Refused: 7%