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Clean Election Advocates Call on Legislature to Replace Raided Funds

AUGUSTA – Supporters of Maine’s Clean Election law are calling on the legislature to replace \$1.7 million that was raided from the Clean Election Fund in 2015. Advocates urged the Appropriation and Financial Affairs Committee to respect the will of Maine voters by fully funding Clean Elections before using state revenue surpluses for other purposes.

“Maine voters have made it clear, they want a strong Clean Election system that allows candidates to run for office without being beholden to wealthy special interests,” said Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) Action board member and volunteer Ann Luther. “Even though voters just reaffirmed their support for Clean Elections at the polls in November, our public financing law is at risk of being underfunded because lawmakers continually raiding the fund.”

While testifying before the legislature’s Appropriation and Financial Affairs Committee on LD 1606, An Act to Provide Funding to the Maine Budget Stabilization Fund, Luther demonstrated that a net amount of more than \$6.0 million is owed to the fund because of legislative and gubernatorial budget raids. The most recent raid occurred in 2015, *after* the recent Clean Election Initiative (also known as Question 1 on the 2015 ballot) was already on its way to the ballot.

When Maine Citizens for Clean Elections wrote and submitted the Citizens Initiative in 2014, the assumptions were based on state government complying with existing law, which included providing the annual \$2 million allotment then required. Unfortunately, between the start of the signature-gathering effort and the vote of Maine people, only \$0.3 million was transferred to the fund, leaving the fund \$1.7 million short just over this time period.

“Mainers voted for Clean Elections because they want their voice to matter as much as the voice of a wealthy donor. Failure to fully fund Clean Elections would be to confirm the worst suspicions of too many Maine voters – that their voices, and their votes, can be ignored in Augusta,” said Luther in her testimony before the legislature. “Please amend this bill to replace the \$1.7 million removed from the

Clean Election Fund in 2015 before transferring the balance of the surplus to the Budget Stabilization Fund or using it for other purposes.”

FULL TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY:

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