



PRESS RELEASE

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Governor LePage Vetoes Bill to Ensure Adequate 2016 Clean Elections Funding

AUGUSTA – Governor Paul LePage vetoed LD 1579 today, a bill that provides \$500,000 in advanced funding to Maine’s Clean Election Fund to ensure adequate funding for the 2016. The bill requires no new spending.

“Reducing the influence of wealthy special interest money in our elections isn’t a Democratic or Republican issue – it’s an issue at the core of our democracy. We are disappointed to see Governor LePage veto a bill that provides enough funding for Clean Elections to ensure that the program will remain solvent for the 2016 election,” said Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) Action Executive Director, Andrew Bossie. “We urge the legislature to listen to the will of Maine voters and override this veto.”

Without the advanced funding, Maine’s Clean Election Fund could run dry this election cycle because of years of legislative funding raids to the program. Since 1996, \$9.8 million has been raided from the Clean Elections Fund, with only \$3.1 million of that amount ever repaid. A net amount of more than \$6.0 million is owed to the fund. The most recent raid totaling \$1.7 million which took effect in January, 2015, after the recent Clean Elections Initiative (also known as Question 1 on the 2015 ballot) was already on its way to the ballot.

Advocates have been urging lawmakers to payback the \$1.7 million raided from the fund in 2015. In recent days, lawmakers instead struck a bipartisan compromise to advance \$500,000 of Clean Election funding appropriated for 2017 to ensure the fund does not run dry in the 2016 election cycle. This legislation requires no new spending.

In the event that adequate funding is not secured before the adjournment of the legislature, it would mark the first time in the history of the program -- since the legislature started "borrowing" from the fund -- that they have allowed the fund to head into an election season with the funding in jeopardy. Advocates are concerned about the ramifications of the fund running short for candidates and voters alike, especially so soon after voters reaffirmed their mandate on a strong Clean Elections law at the polls.

The legislature is will reconvene Friday, April 29, to vote on vetoed legislation.

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