



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 29, 2016

Legislature Fails to Override Veto of Legislation Ensuring Adequate 2016 Clean Elections Funding

AUGUSTA – The Maine legislature today has failed to override Governor Paul LePage’s veto of LD 1579, 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 legislators – many of whom are using Clean Elections funding in their reelection campaigns - 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.

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. Lawmakers instead struck a bipartisan compromise to advance \$500,000 of Clean Election funding appropriated for 2017 to ensure the fund would not run dry in the 2016 election cycle.

LD1579 reflected the required funding for the 2016 election cycle estimated by Ethics Commission staff. Without adequate funding secured before the adjournment of the legislature, this marks the first time in the history of the Clean Elections 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.

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