



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **More Legislative Candidates Use Clean Elections to Fund Their Campaigns in 2016 Races After 2015 Referendum,**

*Sixty-two percent of candidates for state legislature are running under the strengthened Maine Clean Election Act*

**PORTLAND, ME** – Sixty-two percent of candidates for Maine legislative office are using Clean Elections to fund their campaigns in this November’s general election, a marked increase from 53% in the 2014 election cycle. The election of the 128<sup>th</sup> Legislature is the first to be held under changes to the Maine Clean Election Act passed by voters at referendum in 2015.

“Maine voters once again delivered a mandate in 2015 for strong Clean Election laws that put voters, not campaign donors, first and foremost in our elections and government,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “Increased participation in Clean Elections in 2016 shows that candidates are confident that they can run voter-centered campaigns without relying on big-money contributions. The law is working as intended to ensure a government more truly of, by, and for everyday people.”

The Maine Clean Election Act, the first system of full public financing for state candidates in the country, was passed by Maine voters at referendum in 1996. Starting in 2000, candidates began using Clean Elections, and it continued to grow in popularity among candidates across the political spectrum. [Participation in the program peaked in 2008, when 81% of candidates for legislature opted to run Clean Elections campaigns; that year 85% of elected legislators won their races using Clean Elections.](#)

In order to qualify for Clean Elections, candidates must demonstrate support within their districts by collecting a requisite number of \$5 checks from registered voters. Once qualified, Clean Election candidates agree to strict spending limits and are not allowed to raise private donations or spend their own money on their campaign. In return, candidates receive a limited amount of public funding.

In recent years, the program was weakened by a series of Supreme Court decisions, legislative inaction, and budget raids. As a result, participation in Clean Elections declined. Some candidates feared that using Clean Elections would be a disadvantage and opted instead for private fundraising to their campaigns. Responding to this challenge, in 2015, Maine voters passed a referendum that strengthened the Maine Clean Election Act and made it possible for Clean Elections candidates to remain competitive when facing high-spending, privately financed opponents.

In the final count, 179 house candidates and 49 Senate candidates are using using Clean Elections this year, 60.27 and 67.12 percent respectively.

	House	Senate	Total
MCEA	179	49	228
Private	118	24	142
Total	297	73	370
%MCEA	60.27%	67.12%	61.62%

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