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Contact:
Andrew Bossie
MCCE Executive Director
207-899-9983

Private Money in Legislative Elections Declines, Showing Renewed Strength of Clean Elections

Reports show privately-financed candidates receive only 7.1% of their funds from contributors giving \$50 or less.

Portland, ME – Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) released information today showing a significant decrease in contributions from private individuals, PACs and corporations in the recently filed legislative campaign finance reports, compared to the 2014 election at this point.

Private money raised by candidates seeking House and Senate seats has fallen 22% as more candidates have chosen to use the strengthened Clean Election option passed by voters in 2015. With 42 days until the general election, total private campaign contributions have fallen to \$851,478, down from \$1,097,147 raised at this point in 2014. [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 128th Legislature is the first to be held under changes to the Maine Clean Election Act passed by voters at referendum in 2015.

“Mainers want their elected leaders accountable to everyday people in their district, not wealthy special interests that can afford high-priced lobbyists and donors that make big campaign contributions. That’s why Maine voters have twice supported Clean Elections at the ballot,” says Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “Less special interest money in the hands of our elected officials shows that our voter-approved Clean Election Act is working.”

MCCE also found that when candidates do use private funding to run their campaigns, they depend on wealthy individuals, corporations, and their own deep pockets. According to the most recent reports, contributions of \$50 or less only made up 7.1% of the total in 2016, down from 8.9% in 2014. Individuals giving more than \$50 account for 47.8%, with 13.5% from Political Action Committees (PACs), 13.3% from commercial sources, and 12.5% from candidates and their spouses.

“Many Mainers can’t afford big political contributions when they’re struggling to put food on the table, heat in their homes, and stay out of debt. The facts show that under private fundraising, they get left out,” continues Bossie. “With Clean Elections, voters who can give \$5 are the political players that matter.”

Private Contributions to Legislative Candidates as of 42-Day Pre-General Report

	2014	2016	% change
Individual	\$543,873	\$407,262	-25.1%
Political Action Committee	\$192,696	\$115,190	-40.2%
Candidate/ Spouse/ Domestic Partner	\$135,725	\$106,880	-21.3%
Commercial Source	\$115,018	\$113,136	-1.6%
Contributors Giving \$50 or Less	\$42,754	\$33,022	-22.8%
Transfer from Previous Campaign	\$24,185	\$50,537	109.0%
Political Parties	\$23,300	\$11,040	-52.6%
Other Candidate/ Candidate Committee	\$16,571	\$8,762	-47.1%
Nonprofit Organization	\$3,025	\$5,650	86.8%
TOTAL	\$1,097,147	\$851,478	-22.4%

MCCE will be releasing further analysis of fundraising and spending in the 2016 Election.

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