



PRESS RELEASE

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Citizens Meet with Lawmakers on Pro-Democracy Efforts

Mainers urge elected-officials to carry out the will of the voters and demand other campaign reforms

AUGUSTA – Mainers from across the state gathered at the State House this morning to ensure reforms won at the ballot box remain strong as the 128th Legislature begins its work. On the 7th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s disastrous *Citizens United* ruling, dozens of citizens gathered for a rally and discussed with lawmakers the need to fully fund Maine’s Clean Election law, implement the Ranked Choice Voting law without delay, and to support other reforms that would reduce the influence of wealthy special interests in Maine elections and government. Several repeated that the voices of everyday people should be heard clearly, first, and foremost in Augusta.

“Today we ask those who represent us – nearly two-thirds of whom were elected using Clean Elections – to respect the will of Maine voters,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “That means fully funding Clean Elections, reining in the power of lobbyists and undisclosed, out-of-state money, and implementing our voter-approved Ranked Choice Voting law without delay.”

Advocates expressed concerns that the proposed biennial budget doesn’t include the full funding required by the law passed by voters in 2015. Senator Roger Katz (R-Kennebec) said on the eve of the event, “I know that many of my colleagues, Republicans, Democrats, and independents, would not have run for office if it were not for Maine’s Clean Elections law and our democracy is stronger because of it. I stand behind civic participation and ensuring the voices of everyday people are represented in Augusta - that’s why I support full funding of our voter-approved Clean Elections Act.”

Joan Saxe of Freeport echoed those sentiments Thursday, adding “People like me need to be able to make our voices heard as loudly as big business and industry groups that can hire lobbyists and make campaign contributions.” She and others volunteered on the Clean

Elections Initiative, the citizen-initiated referendum that advanced transparency laws and restored Maine's landmark public financing law after it was weakened by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2011. Advocates celebrated the fact that 64% percent of legislators elected in 2016 used Clean Elections, up 24% from the 2014 elections under the weakened law.

MCCE announced its legislative to-do list this session that includes bills to ban privately-funded legislators and candidates from operating and controlling their own political action committees or "PACs." Much of the funding for raised and spent through PACs comes from out-of-state source, lobbyists and their clients.

"The lobbyist and special interest group with the largest checkbook has the most direct influence over public policy decision making in our state," said Senator Justin Chenette (D-Saco), who is sponsoring the legislation this session that would ban lobbyist contributions. "Sitting legislators should be banned from accepting thousands of dollars from lobbyists and the very corporations they are supposed to be regulating."

League of Women Voters of Maine representative Helen Hanlon addressed the historic struggle to expand our democracy, including the recent referendum on Ranked Choice Voting. "Those democracy reforms that can make the biggest difference are sometimes the ones that face the most serious threats. That's why we're here today. We believe in the benefits of Ranked Choice Voting and we want the will of the people to be honored."

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