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Democracy Advocates Call on Legislature to Fully Fund Voter-Approved Clean Election Law

*More than two dozen citizens testify unanimously in support of Legislative and
Gubernatorial Clean Election Program for 2018.*

AUGUSTA – Supporters of Maine’s Clean Election law called on the Maine Legislature to provide full funding for Clean Elections. Dozens of Mainers appeared at a budget hearing before the Joint Committees on Appropriation and Financial Affairs and Veterans and Legal Affairs. They called for the legislature to respect the will of Maine voters by fully funding Clean Elections, including replacing \$1.7 million that was raided from the Clean Election Fund in 2015.

“It is imperative to adequately fund the program and to implement what the voters of Maine sought,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “In 2015, for the second time in 20 years, the voters of Maine, by a substantial margin, reaffirmed their support for publicly funded elections for candidates to the Maine legislature and governorship. In doing so, they endorsed returning to essentially the same funding levels enacted by voters in 1996, along with increased transparency of private political money and increased penalties for violating Maine’s election laws. Furthermore, voters reinstated the Clean Elections gubernatorial program.”

The biennial budget submitted by Governor LePage dramatically underfunds Clean Elections. His proposal falls \$2 million short of funding called for in statute, and fails to return funds that were used for other state programs but are needed for the 2018 elections.

Republican former State Senator Ed Youngblood of Brewer testified. “This program needs to be fully funded as voted on by the public. It has had lots of bipartisan support over the years. This budget should ensure that there is enough money to run both legislative and gubernatorial Clean Elections.”

Youngblood was joined by Mainers from across the state and across the political spectrum. Fellow Republican Jolene Lovejoy from Rumford added her support for Clean Elections. “Ensuring full funding is one reason we went back to the ballot a second time, and our strong victory should be the last word on this... Failure to fully fund Clean Elections would be to confirm the worst suspicions of many Maine voters – that their voices, and their votes, can be ignored in Augusta.” Andrew Stevenson of Belfast concurred. “I am here today because I believe that the widespread cynicism and disgust with our current election process can only be changed if you make the Clean Election Fund stronger, wider, and more robust.”

Participation in Clean Elections increased in 2016, after the law was strengthened at the polls. Sixty-three percent of the current legislature used Clean Elections to win their seats. The 2018 election campaign will be the first campaign since 2010 in which candidates for governor will be able to qualify for public funds for their campaigns.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections also testified on Monday when the Veterans and Legal Affairs heard several bills dealing with campaign finance. MCCE supports LD413: An Act to Limit the Influence of Lobbyists by Expanding the Prohibition on Accepting Political Contributions, which extends the timeframe for the ban on lobbyist contributions, which is currently in place only during the legislative session.

[FULL TRANSCRIPT OF MCCE ACTION’S TESTIMONY ON THE BUDGET HERE.](#)

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