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Monday, April 10, 2017

Maine Citizens Testify in Favor of Ban on Legislator-Controlled PACs

AUGUSTA – Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) today called on the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee to support LD 1211 – An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Legislative Political Action Committees. Advocates highlighted the need to expand the ban on leadership PACs to all candidates in order to preserve voter confidence in the legislative process.

“Leadership PACs open the doors to some very un-democratic influences over public policy, and we have long opposed them,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director on Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “In our view, eliminating leadership PACs is one of the most important changes we can make in our campaign finance laws.”

In the 127th legislature, Clean Election candidates were banned from controlling their own PACs. However, this ban does not currently apply to privately-financed candidates, who can still take unlimited donations into their personal PACs. This practice allows legislators to avoid the contribution limits – currently \$400 per election, \$800 per cycle – created to reduce the influence of any one donor or industry over a legislator.

MCCE presented [research](#) on the source of contributions to leadership PACs, showing that many donations come from the industries – pharmaceutical companies, cable companies, casinos and tobacco manufacturers – that legislators are elected to regulate.

Of particular concern is a new type of PAC created in September, 2015, specifically to solicit contributions from lobbyists who appear before individual legislative committees. The “Chairman’s PAC” events featured an opportunity for lobbyists to make large contributions in order to speak and socialize with the chairs of the committees where the lobbyists have business. Using the leaders of the policy making committees to raise money from the lobbyists who appear before them further erodes public confidence in the legislative process.

“Let’s be clear,” added Bossie. “The legislators who run these PACs are not bad people. They are playing by the rules that now exist. We do not fault them for taking full advantage of what the rules allow, but we do think it is time to change the rules. LD 1211 will accomplish that in a fair and even-handed manner.”

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