



For Immediate Release

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Report Details Increased Role of Private Money in Maine's Legislative Races

AUGUSTA – Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) released the fourth in its series of Money in Politics reports today.

Preliminary Report on 2012 Campaign Money: Private Money Making A Comeback In Maine Elections

analyzes the campaign finance reports filed by legislative candidates as well as groups and individuals who have made independent expenditures in the 2012 election cycle. The purpose of the report is to examine the effects of changes to the Maine Clean Election Act made by the 125th Legislature.

The report found:

- **A marked decline in the rate of participation in the Clean Election system.**
- **A surge of private money going directly to legislative candidates.**
- **An emphasis on large donations.**
- **An explosion of independent expenditures.**

“This snapshot of the money being raised and spent in the 2012 legislative elections shows a clear and troubling trend: private money is roaring back as a dominant force in Maine elections,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of MCCE. “After more than a decade of progress thanks to our citizen-initiated Clean Election law, Maine is moving in the wrong direction.”

Much of the increase in private money is attributable to the lower participation in Clean Elections. From a high of 80%, participation has dropped to 65% this year – a level not seen since 2002. But the data also show that at this point in the cycle, private money has increased 300% over a similar period in the 2010 cycle, so candidates are raising more money into these privately funded campaigns.

More than seventy percent of the money raised by privately funded candidates came in donations of more than \$100. That marks a big departure from Clean Election campaigns in which participating candidates may not accept large donations.

Independent expenditures have also increased dramatically. With the most intensive period of this spending yet to come, the amount spent has already exceeded the totals spent in prior election cycles.

“One single State Senate race has already seen more than \$300,000 in outside spending,” said Bossie. “This is unprecedented. In prior election cycles, targeted Clean Election candidates like the ones in this race would have had the means to respond to the attacks leveled in negative ads and mailers. This year the candidates are being outspent many times over by warring PACs who will have little accountability when the election is over.”

“The last thing Maine people want is for special interests to control our elections,” continued Bossie.

Bossie concluded by encouraging voters to find out who is behind campaign ads and communicate directly with candidates.

“We urge all Mainers to take advantage of our transparency laws between now and November 6th,” Bossie said. “Look and listen for the disclaimer stating whether a candidate is responsible for a particular ad or piece of campaign literature. If it is not paid for and authorized by a candidate, then look to see who is behind the message in order to determine whether it is credible.”

“Get to know the candidates who ask for your vote – that’s the best way to sort the facts from the fiction in campaign ads. While you’re at it you can ask them where they stand on campaign finance reform and the role money plays in our elections.”

The report released today is preliminary since the full extent of spending in the 2012 election is not yet known. MCCE will do a more comprehensive analysis after Election Day when all the campaign finance reports have been filed.

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