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Press Release

National Polls Show People Want Money Out of Politics Regardless of Political Party

Advocates urge citizens to stand up for their Clean Election law as legislators consider weakening the citizen-initiated system.

As the Maine State Legislature prepares to vote, perhaps as early as this week, on whether to strengthen or weaken the Maine Clean Election Act, new national polling has been released showing broad bipartisan support for measures that reduce the influence of big money in politics. The survey released on January 19 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner of 1,000 likely voters in 2012 demonstrates that voters want their leaders to stand for reform, be accountable, and break the grip that big money has on public policy.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE), Maine's leading public-interest group on campaign finance reform, today called for the legislature to uphold the will of Maine people by voting for a strong replacement to the "triggered" matching funds that were part of the original law. A recent Supreme Court decision overturned the matching funds element of the Maine Clean Election Act that candidates rely on to remain competitive in hotly contested races. MCCE favors the alternative to matching funds known as the "requalifying option." The Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee issued a majority report that calls for stripping matching funds without replacement; essentially doing nothing to help keep the system viable. Votes could be scheduled at anytime.

"This new polling shows that people across the country want what we have here in Maine – a government where lawmakers are held accountable to people – to voters – not corporate campaign donors," said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of MCCE. "Maine people led the nation when they initiated and passed our landmark Clean Elections law. Now is not the time to turn back the clock by weakening our ground-breaking law and giving big moneyed special interests the upper hand."

The polling by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner shows that a strong majority of Republican voters (56% to 40%) and a supermajority of Independent voters (66% to 30%) say reducing the influence of money in politics is a very important factor in determining how they vote in 2012.

“At a time when Americans are looking for leadership on this issue, the 125th Maine Legislature has, incredibly, taken steps to undermine our first-in-the-nation law,” said Alison Smith, president of MCCE.

“While votes to repeal Clean Elections outright have failed, the effort to weaken the law persists, as the failure to replace matching funds demonstrates. Voters need to contact their legislators and urge them to act! The Ethics Commission came up with a very good alternative, and the Legislature should adopt it without delay.”

Another national poll, conducted by Lake Research for a consortium of small business groups, surveyed 500 small business owners across the country, and found that 88% of them negatively view the role money plays in politics.

Greenberg Poll: <http://www.mainelections.org/assets/files/Democracy%20Corps%20Poll%201%202012.pdf>

Lake Research Poll: <http://www.mainelections.org/assets/files/Small%20Business%20Poll%201%202012.pdf>

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