



For Immediate Release

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House and Senate Send Clean Election Bill to Gov. LePage for Signature

Hearing on Clean Election portion of the budget will take place on Wednesday

The Maine Senate voted today to enact LD 1774, a bill that advocates say will weaken Maine's citizen-initiated Clean Election laws by only stripping the law of the matching funds provision and not providing any replacement. A Supreme Court ruling last summer invalidated matching funds, a portion of the law that allowed Clean Election candidates to remain competitive in races when opponents or outside groups spent large amounts of money to influence electoral outcomes. Several attempts to amend the law with an alternative recommended by the state's Ethics Commission failed on largely party line votes. Yesterday, the Maine House of Representatives voted similarly to enact the bill.

"Maine people initiated and approved our Clean Election Act to reduce the role that special interests play in our elections and policy making," said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. "The legislature should have acted to keep our Clean Election laws strong as voters intended; instead they voted to allow more corporate and wealthy influence in our government. Maine people will not tolerate this."

Tomorrow, the legislature's Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee will hold a public hearing with the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee on the portion of Gov. Paul LePage's supplemental budget that seeks to remove \$2.45 million from the Maine Clean Election Fund. If implemented, the move would drain the fund of resources to support a stronger public financing system for legislative and gubernatorial candidates in the future. The Fund, by statute, is a separate, dedicated, non-lapsing, interest-bearing Fund, and it was not designed to support other state programs. Advocates will present testimony asking the legislature to preserve the funding, which is partially supported by a voluntary income tax check-off.

"This weakening of Clean Election coupled with the raid on the Fund is an affront to Maine citizens," said Alison Smith, President of MCCE. "At a time when people everywhere despair at the entrenched influence of special interests, this is no time to undermine our effective, citizen-initiated, first-in-the-nation law."

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