



For Immediate Release

March 29, 2012

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Governor LePage Signs Do-Nothing Clean Elections Bill

Recent poll demonstrates widespread support for Clean Elections and strong campaign finance reform

Today Governor Paul LePage signed into law LD 1774, a bill described by Maine Citizens for Clean Elections as a “do-nothing” bill.

“The legislature and the governor have weakened our first-in-the-nation Clean Election system by failing to replace the matching funds component that was struck down by an unfriendly Court,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of MCCE. “They have squandered the opportunity to lead, and instead have opened the door to more special interest influence.”

LD 1774 came about after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the matching funds portion of Arizona’s Clean Election system. Knowing that Maine’s similar system would also fall, the 125th Legislature passed a Resolve in June of 2011 defining the process and the timeline for making necessary adjustments to the Clean Election program in advance of the 2012 elections.

Despite a strong recommendation from the nonpartisan Ethics Commission and strong support from Clean Election advocates, the legislature rejected the “requalifying option” which would have allowed candidates to voluntarily collect a higher number of \$5 Qualifying Contributions from local voters in order to be eligible for supplemental funds later in the campaign. The Ethics Commission also warned against doing nothing, saying the existing system without matching funds would not be viable for a large number of candidates.

“Here was a budget-neutral, common-sense alternative that would have kept Clean Elections strong for decades to come,” said Bossie. “It makes no sense that a majority in this legislature – a legislature in which 80% of members won their seats using Clean Elections – would take action that diminishes our citizen-initiated law. Weakening Clean Elections just means that PACs and outside spenders will play a bigger role. That’s the wrong direction for Maine.”

Senator Roger Katz, Senator John Patrick and Representative Michael Carey all presented compromise amendments in the hope of gaining majority support for a stronger system. All efforts at compromise failed.

Bossie called attention to a recently released poll, saying, “The poll shows the importance of Clean Elections to Maine people, and their continued support for public funding in both legislative and gubernatorial campaigns. Maine people want stronger, not weaker, reforms, and they want candidates to address this in the upcoming elections.”

The poll, conducted by the Maine People’s Resource Center for MCCE, is can be found at <http://www.mainelection.org/assets/files/MPRC%20Poll%20March%202012.pdf>