



For Immediate Release

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Governor's Budget Proposal Guts Clean Elections

AUGUSTA – Governor Paul LePage's recently released biennial budget proposes raiding the Clean Election Fund of \$4 million, which would leave no resources for legislative or gubernatorial candidates to utilize the popular voter-enacted program in 2014. "The governor's proposal to kill Clean Elections would ensure that big-money special interests dominate our elections in 2014," said Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) Executive Director, Andrew Bossie. "Maine citizens demanded Clean Elections to ensure that government is accountable to voters, not the highest bidding wealthy donors. This budget would return us to the time when lawmakers must ask lobbyists and outside corporate interests to fund their campaigns, giving these groups more power in Augusta," added Bossie. "You can't balance the budget by opening the gates to lobbyist influence," he continued.

There is a strong movement in Maine to strengthen and restore Clean Elections after a recent Supreme Court ruling and legislative actions weakened the law. Record-breaking election spending from outside groups in 2012 added momentum to this movement. State Sen. Ed Youngblood (R- Brewer) says, "We should be fulfilling the will of Maine people by strengthening our campaign finance laws so that voters, not out-of-state special interests, have a greater voice in Augusta. I spoke with hundreds of voters – including Democrats, Republicans, and independents - who all want big money out of our elections, and voters in control. That's why I'm sponsoring legislation that would strengthen our Clean Election Act."

The Maine Clean Election Act was approved overwhelmingly by voters in 1996 so that community-supported candidates could compete against wealthy opponents and those with close ties to special interests. Voters approved the creation of a separate, dedicated fund, supported in part by annual allocation and voluntary contributions from Maine people to ensure adequate resources to administer the Clean Election program.

Maine was the first state to adopt a Clean Election law and has been cited as a model across the country. More than 70% of the 126th legislature used Clean Elections to win their seats, and the program has enjoyed high levels of participation from all parties. The voluntary system requires candidates to forgo private fundraising by collecting \$5 donations from in-district supporters to qualify for a grant of public funds. In 2012, four times as many people made contributions to Clean Election candidates as gave to privately funded candidates.

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