



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Maine Citizens Testify Against Proposal to Gut Clean Elections**

**Augusta** – Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) will testify on Wednesday in opposition to Part MM of the governor’s budget proposal. The Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Veteran and Legal Affairs will convene the hearing at 1:00 pm.

“Governor LePage aims to gut our citizen-initiated Clean Election system, rendering it unusable in the 2014 elections,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of MCCE. “The hearing will allow Maine people to weigh in on the importance of Clean Elections and the need to strengthen it.”

Maine voters passed the Maine Clean Election Act in a 1996 referendum campaign, creating the nation’s first full public funding option for state candidates. Since 2002, the program has been used by the majority of legislative candidates. Year after year, polls show continuing strong support by a broad spectrum of Maine people.

“All around the country, people are frustrated by the increasing role of money in politics,” said Bossie. “Defunding Clean Elections would move our state backward and grant wealthy, corporate, and out-of-state interests more influence in Augusta at the expense of Maine people. We need to push forward with a strong Clean Election program and other measures to reduce the influence of big money in elections and in government.”

The voter-approved law contains an explicit funding mechanism, calling for “separate, dedicated, non-lapsing, Fund” with seven specific streams of revenue. In the past, governors and legislatures have cut funds from Clean Elections, but in every case adequate funds were returned in time for the next election. Governor LePage has made it clear that funding Clean Elections is not a priority during his term. During the 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the governor supported bills to eliminate Clean Election funding for gubernatorial candidates, and he successfully led the effort to double the contribution limit for privately funded candidates for governor. The current budget proposal is the first attempt he has made to undermine both the legislative and gubernatorial programs.

“We can’t afford to balance this budget by having Augusta lawmakers take up Washington-style fundraising tactics in their campaigns,” said Bossie. “We need Maine lawmakers accountable to everyday Maine voters, not wealthy campaign donors. That’s why Maine people enacted and funded Clean Elections and that’s why they continue to support it today.”

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