



**For Immediate Release**

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**Report Shows Pro-Tobacco Forces Giving Heavily to Maine Campaign**

Bills to increase taxes on tobacco products appear unlikely to pass,  
fate of similar initiatives in tax reform proposals uncertain.

Augusta, ME - Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) released a report today that shows that cigarette manufacturers and their retail allies spent \$539,000 since 2000 to influence the outcome of political campaigns, while the nonprofits, associations, and others who work to solve the problems of tobacco addiction gave \$118,000. The report, entitled "Tobacco Policy", analyzes the campaign spending on both sides of the legislative debate on two pending bills and finds that pro-tobacco forces heavily outspend their anti-tobacco counterparts.

The two bills in question are LD 1326, which requires that all tobacco products be taxed at the same rate as cigarettes and provides additional funding for a tobacco hotline, and LD 1406, which raises the tax on cigarettes to deter youth smoking and provide funding for cessation programs. At this point in the legislative session, neither bill appears poised for passage. However, pending tax reform proposals before the legislature may also change how tobacco products are taxed in the future.

"Tobacco bills are introduced in every legislature, and it's no coincidence that tobacco interests are among the most active political donors," said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of MCCE. "But Maine people deserve to know that decisions in Augusta are made in their best interest, not because of campaign contributions."

The report found that both sides give to Republican and Democratic candidates and political action committees, but pro-tobacco interests give more than three times as much to Republicans as Democrats. The anti-tobacco interest giving is more balanced, but slightly favors Democrats.

"There's a lot at stake when it comes to laws that effect specific industries or sectors," continued Bossie. "The Money in Politics Project will continue to shine the light on campaign money so that Maine people can understand this important dimension of our political system."

Also under consideration by the 126<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature are proposals to increase transparency of political spending and strengthen the Maine Clean Election public funding system, which allows candidates to run for office without raising private donations. MCCE supports these bills so the citizens can better understand and reduce the role of big campaign money in the political process.

The full report can be found at [www.mainelection.org/money-8](http://www.mainelection.org/money-8)

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