



PRESS RELEASE

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First Run of Portland's Clean Elections Program a Success

[PORTLAND, ME] — Election Day results have proven that Mainers care about issues surrounding money in politics. Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) want to highlight two takeaways from this election season: the success of the Portland Clean Elections program and the overwhelming support for Question 2 on the statewide ballot.

Portland Clean Elections & Strong Candidate Participation

Of the 13 candidates in contested races, seven chose to use Clean Elections. This excludes the uncontested school board seats, where no money has been raised by the sole candidates.

This 54% participation rate, while lower than the 63% average participation by state legislative candidates in the Maine Clean Elections program in 2022, is significantly higher than the 30% participation of candidates when that state program first rolled out in 2000.

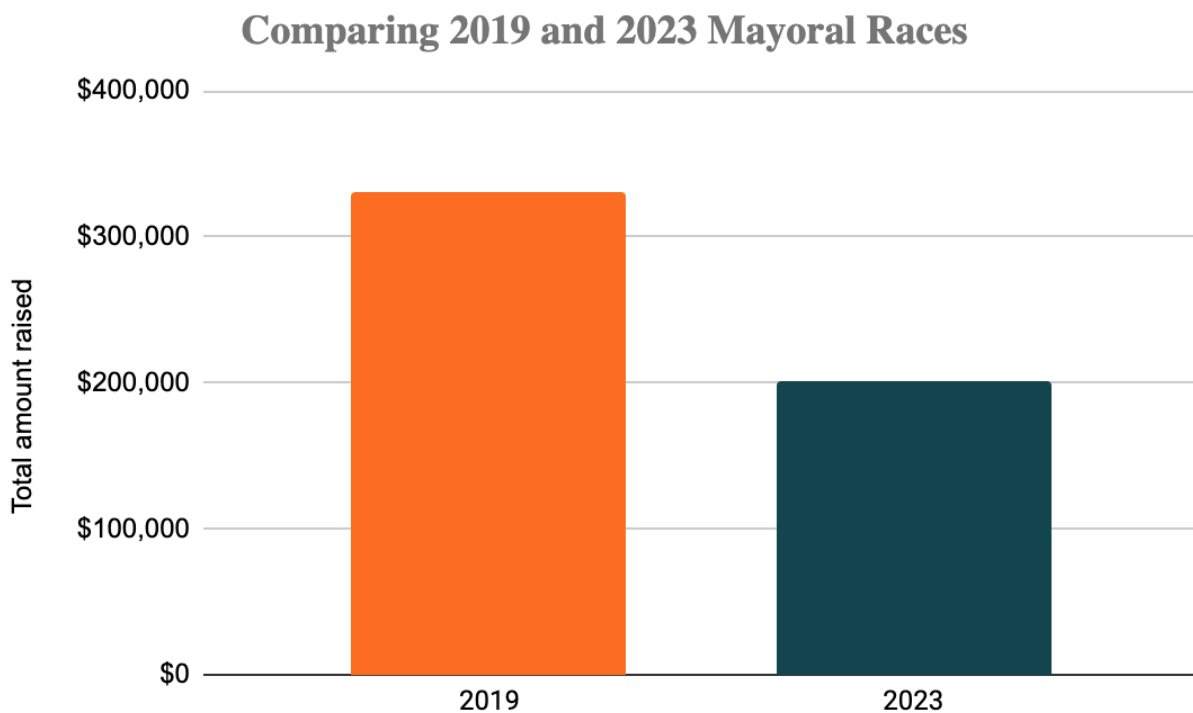
Many candidates have chosen to take advantage of the opportunity to secure supplemental funding beyond their additional distribution. One candidate stayed at the initial distribution, one maxed out with all three supplemental payments, while the remaining took one or two additional payments.

“While we intend to interview all candidates to determine how Clean Elections played into their campaign strategies, this variety of usage suggests that the supplemental funding and total amount available was appropriate to the needs of candidates and that candidates were able to right-size their campaigns,” said Anna Kellar, Executive Director of MCCE.

Spending is Down

The total amount of election spending is down when measured against the last comparable years.

In 2019, a record \$330,239 was spent on the mayor's race, with two candidates spending well over \$100,000 each. This year, the total is \$200,899 raised, some of which may return to the Clean Elections fund if unspent. The largest campaign, Andrew Zarro, who is using Clean Elections has raised \$84,368 and spent \$65,643. Two of the five (six if counting the declared write in) candidates are using Clean Elections.

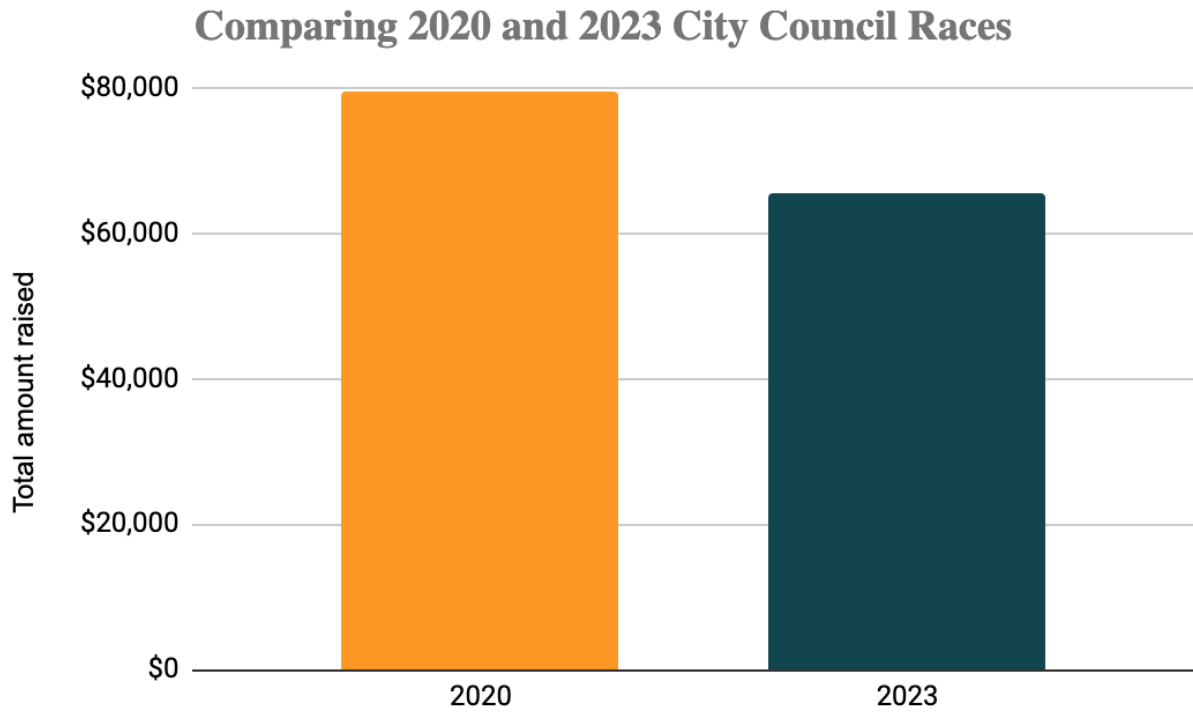


Similar dynamics apply to other offices when compared to the last time these seats were up in 2020. The total spent on city council and school board this year is \$56,679, compared to \$99,389 in 2020.

In the at-large council race this year, the two candidates, both using Clean Elections, have raised \$33,833,80 and spent \$26,181 so far. In 2020, the four candidates running spent a total of \$58,517.

The only races with higher spending year on year are the district council seats, where this year \$10,657 has been spent in District 4, and \$14,030 in District 5. In 2020 those races were \$8,915

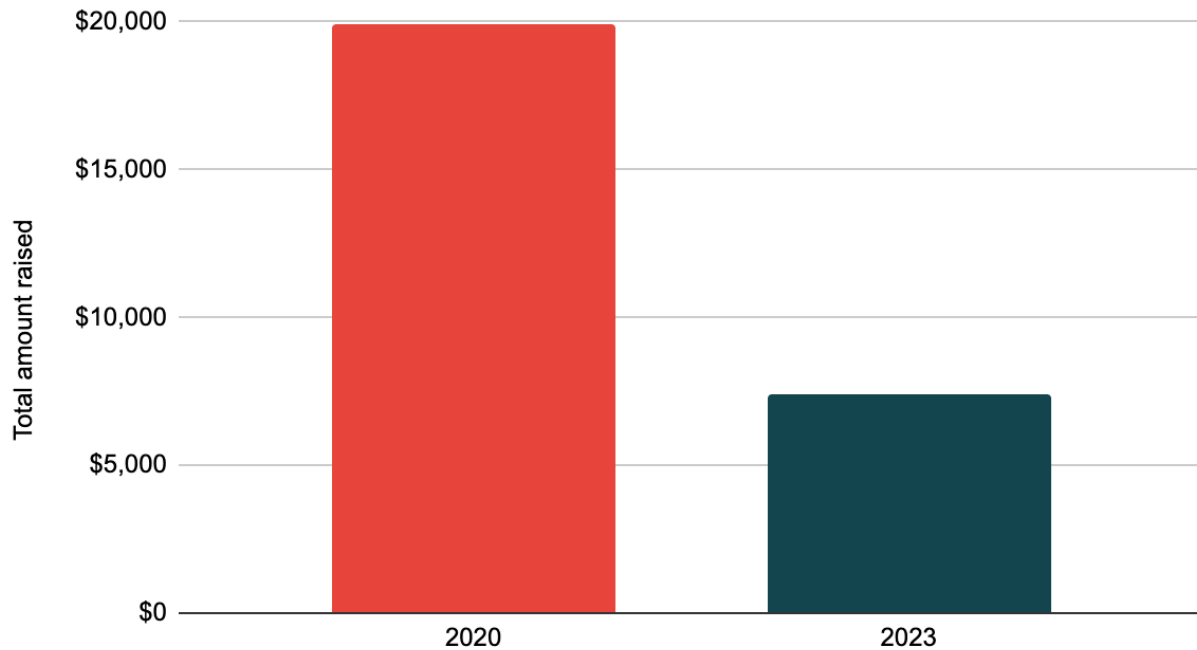
and \$12,053 respectively. In both districts, there is one Clean Elections candidate and one using private funding.



In the at-large school board race, the two candidates, one of whom is using Clean Elections, have raised \$7,381 and spent \$5,810.23 so far. In 2020, \$14,160 was spent by three candidates.

This year's district school board races were uncontested, with the sole candidates not raising or spending any money.

Comparing 2020 and 2023 School Board Races



More voters engaged thanks to Clean Elections

The number of individuals making donations has increased, thanks to the qualifying contribution requirements. 1,260 five dollar qualifying contributions were made to the Clean Elections seven candidates. While individuals may have given to more than one candidate, this is still a remarkable comparison to the approximately 251 individuals who gave to the privately financed candidates.

What is more, all the qualifying contributions, by law, came from Portland voters.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections and the League of Women Voters of Maine began the campaign to establish clean elections in Portland in 2019. [See the full timeline here.](#)

Question 2 passes with majority support

Question 2 had broad bipartisan sponsorship, and over 80,000 Mainers signed the petition to get it on the ballot. Early election results show that Question 2 will win in a landslide victory, proving that Maine voters want to limit political spending.

Question 2 closes a loophole and will prohibit donations and disbursements by foreign governments, foreign government-owned entities, and foreign government-influenced entities in ballot measures and candidate campaigns.

Question 2 also calls on our congressional delegation to support a 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would fight corruption and reduce the influence of money in politics. This would turn the tide after the disastrous 2010 decision in the *Citizens United* case, when the Supreme Court overturned a six decade-long prohibition against spending corporate and union treasury money to directly campaign for or against federal candidates.

MCCE [endorsed Question 2](#).

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[Maine Citizens for Clean Elections](#) (MCCE) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization working to ensure that Maine's campaign finance laws, elections, and government serve the public interest, both in principle and in practice. We engage Maine people from across the political spectrum, using research, education, and outreach to further fairness, inclusion, and opportunity in our politics.