



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 1033 – An Act To Eliminate the 24-hour Reporting Requirement
Under the Election Laws

March 27, 2017

Senator Mason, Representative Luchini, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 1033 – An Act To Eliminate the 24-hour Reporting Requirement Under the Election Laws.

My name is Andrew Bossie. I am the Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over twenty years, and one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections. We are proud of our national reputation, but we are all Mainers, and our mission has always been with and for the people of this state.

Under current law, contributions of \$5,000 or more, and expenditures of \$1,000 or more, must be reported within 24 hours during the closing days of the campaign. This requirement currently applies to state candidates, county candidates, state party committees, municipal party committees, PACs, and ballot question committees.

LD 1033 would eliminate the 24-hour reporting requirements. We testify against the bill.

One of the most important things that our campaign finance laws achieve is full transparency and the availability of information to the public in a way that is useful as they exercise the right to participate in our elections. Conservatives, moderates, and liberals; Democrats, Republicans, Greens, Libertarians, and unenrolled – everyone agrees on the value of transparency and timely disclosure. Disclosure long after Election Day does not satisfy this objective.

Accelerated contribution and expenditure reports have been required in Maine since at least ten years before the Clean Election Act was passed in 1996. There is a good reason why these reports are required in the final days of the election. This is when large amounts of money can sway a race. And it is also when voters are making up their minds. The prompt disclosure of expenditures and contributions in the final weeks of the campaign is valuable information for the public. Many other states and the federal government have some form of accelerated reporting requirement such as this.

While we oppose this bill, if the Committee finds a reason to move forward in the public interest,

we would urge you to retain the accelerated disclosure requirements for large contributions received during the final period of the campaign. If those contributions are subject to the 24-hour reporting rule, and if independent expenditures continue to be reported pursuant to Commission Rules 94-270, Section 10(3)(B)(2) and (3), we believe most of the information needed by the public will still be available in a timely fashion. Under this compromise, you might drop 24-hour reporting for large expenditures but retain them for large contributions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information for the work session.