



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 1122 – An Act To Amend the Campaign Reports and Finances Law and the
Maine Clean Election Act

April 3, 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 1122 – An Act To Amend the Campaign Reports and Finances Law and the Maine Clean Election Act.

My name is Bob Howe of Howe Cahill. I am here today on behalf 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.

LD 1122 is the Ethics Commission's routine agency housekeeping bill. Most of the provisions of this bill are intended to simplify and clarify administrative procedures. The net effect of the bill will be to streamline compliance for candidates, committees and others who are involved in campaign finance reporting or who use the Clean Election Act. In a couple of areas the Commission will be asking for the reporting of information such as names and addresses that previously were not specifically authorized, but this is good practice and will not be onerous.

This bill will, among other things:

- • Ensure that the Ethics Commission provides this Committee with an annual statistical report on campaign finance activity;
- • Improve 24-hour reporting at the close of a campaign by eliminating requirements for unopposed primary candidates and clarifying that municipal party committees do not need to file those reports;
- • Clarifying statutory language on a number of reporting deadlines;
- • Allowing candidates to use their own funds to pay for money order fees; and
- • Clarifying that a qualifying contribution is not valid if it is not signed by the person making the qualifying contribution (unless that person is unable to sign due to disability).

A few of the provisions in LD 1122 overlap with portions of other legislation that has already come before the Committee, especially regarding 24-hour reports and the use of money

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections PO Box 181817 Portland, ME 14112 mainecleanelections.org



orders. If the Committee proceeds with those other bills we suggest that they be reconciled with LD 1122 to ensure that all the bills enacted this session are consistent with each other.

The only provision that raises questions for MCCE is the one allowing candidates to use personal funds to pay money order fees. We are not aware of any rationale for this change, and note that candidates use Seed Money to pay money order fees during the qualifying period. After qualifying, candidates may use Clean Election funds to pay money order fees if they continue to collect additional Qualifying Contributions. These are reasonable provisions that ensure accountability, and we would appreciate it if the sponsor or the commission would clarify the motivation behind and justification for the proposed change.

Overall, LD 1122 is a bill that everyone should be able to support, and we hope this money order issue will be sorted out so that the bill will earn a unanimous vote.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Ethics Commission staff for identifying these improvements and efficiencies and for the effort to bring this bill to the legislature. MCCE works with the Ethics Commission staff, their website, and their other resources on practically a daily basis. It makes good sense to pass LD 1122 so that they can continue to perform their exemplary work on behalf of all of us.

Thank you very much. We will be present for the work session.