



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 1210 – An Act Regarding the Maine Clean Election Fund

April 10, 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 1210 – An Act Regarding the Maine Clean Election Fund.

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.

The funding required for Clean Elections is a small price to pay for citizen ownership of our democracy. Clean Elections helps keep the cost of campaigns down, and it has proven to be a very efficient and thrifty program. Most important, it keeps the voters in the driver’s seat.

If the full statutory amount had been budgeted each year, and no funds removed, the Clean Election Fund would be in fine shape for the next election cycle. But over the years, the legislature has not provided the funding set forth in the Clean Election Act. A total of \$12.7 million has been “de-appropriated” from the Fund. A total of \$6.1 million was returned to the Fund, leaving it currently short by \$6.6 million.

MCCE would like to see the full \$6.6 million returned to the fund, but we are also realistic. LD 1210 would repay \$1.7 million, which is a good start.

The financial effect of LD 1210 is summarized as follows:

| | before LD 1210 | after LD 1210 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| FY 2018 | \$3,000,000 | \$6,000,000 |
| FY 2019 | <u>\$3,000,000</u> | <u>\$1,700,000</u> |
| total for biennium | <u>\$6,000,000</u> | <u>\$7,700,000</u> |

net increase = \$1.7 million

There are several bills dealing with Clean Election funding, including the biennial budget LD 390. The budget released by the governor earlier this year accounts for \$2 million per each year of the biennium, when voters clearly voted for \$3 million per year of the biennium. We agree with the Ethics Commission that the best way to address the funding shortfall is in the budget bill and we will advocate for that both here and in the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee.

Regardless of the vehicle used to accomplish this, we strongly urge you to ensure the full amount of funding that voters approved so that all candidates who qualify in 2018 – House, Senate and Gubernatorial – can be confident that the funding for which they qualify will be there for them.

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