



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 408 – An Act to Prohibit Taxpayer-funded Campaign Expenditures from Being Used on Post-election Parties.

February 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 408 – An Act to Prohibit Taxpayer-funded Campaign Expenditures from Being Used on Post-election Parties.

My name is Andrew Bossie. I am the Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. My testimony is neither for nor against LD 408.

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.

In our experience, almost every candidate gathers with friends and supporters after the polls close on Election Day. It is only natural for folks on a campaign to celebrate their work together while they wait for the results. And if they include cheese and crackers, a few pizzas, and some libations – that is only natural. It is as American as baseball and apple pie. In fact, if it encourages and supports people on account of their involvement our democracy, we are all for it.

LD 408 addresses how publicly funded candidates pay for this one post-election activity, barring such candidates from using Clean Election funds that remain after the election. Currently, Ethics Commission rules prohibit publicly funded House candidates from spending more than \$250, and Senate candidates from spending more than \$750, for all post-election activities. These limits only apply to publicly funded candidates. There is no comparable restriction on what a privately funded candidate may do to thank supporters after an election with the funds raised for their campaign.

Our view is that the current Ethics Commission guidelines are fair, adequate, and work well in practice. We don't see a problem that needs a solution. That being said, we doubt that this change would seriously undermine the Clean Election program. One benefit of relying on the current guidelines is that they clearly state that candidates may use either limited Clean Election funds or their own money for these post-election activities. The committee may wish to clarify whether Clean Election candidates' post-election parties are subject to any regulation or limit or whether they are outside the scope of campaign finance law.

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