

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 54 – An Act To Limit the Influence of Lobbyists by Expanding the Prohibition on
Accepting Political Contributions

January 30, 2019

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 54 – An Act To Limit the Influence of
Lobbyists by Expanding the Prohibition on Accepting Political Contributions.

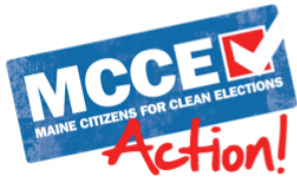
My name is Anna Kellar. I am the Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean
Elections.

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.

We strongly support LD 54.

Let me first say that we have nothing against lobbying and lobbyists. We are lobbying
you right now. Lobbying is protected by the constitutional right to petition one's
government. MCCE supports the right to lobby in all its forms – whether volunteer,
citizen lobbying, or paid advocacy by professionals.

We do have a problem, however, when lobbying gets intertwined with financial
contributions. When a lobbyist gives financial support to a legislator, and then asks that
legislator to support a particular bill for the lobbyist's client – now we have a problem. At
the extreme, there is an agreement between the legislator and the lobbyist. This is the



crime of bribery. But even when you don't reach the extreme of bribery, even when there is no explicit agreement – the introduction of money into the lobbying relationship is troubling. The feeling of financial indebtedness and gratitude has a subtle effect on the recipient. For example, the recipient may be just a little more willing to agree to a meeting. The recipient may pay just a little more attention to the issues raised by the contributor. The recipient may be just a little more indulgent of the contributor's arguments. The recipient, feeling that he or she is in the presence of a supporter, may feel more inclined to follow the contributor's advice.

Even where the relationship is squeaky clean, campaign contributions from a lobbyist to a lawmaker raise the appearance of undue influence. They damage the public trust in government, which we know is already tragically low. It would be much better if the public never had to worry about whether the legislature is subject to influence from campaign contributions from the very interests that are trying to drive public policy in a certain direction.

The legislature has already approved this concept, and it has been part of Maine law for many years. LD 54 only removes the artificial time restrictions on the current ban, making it a year-round ban instead of just a session ban. Several other states¹ currently have a year-round ban on lobbyist contributions. With Maine's strong history of protecting the integrity of our elections and government, we believe Maine should join those states and enact LD 54.

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

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/prohibited-donors.aspx>