



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 383, An Act To An Act To Require Corporations to Have Approval from a Majority of Their Shareholders before Making Political Contributions Valued at Greater Than \$5,000

Monday, March 2, 2015

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on LD 383, An Act To Require Corporations to Have Approval from a Majority of Their Shareholders before Making Political Contributions Valued at Greater Than \$5,000. My name is Bob Howe, and I am testifying on behalf of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) is a nonpartisan organization that works in the public interest to advocate for, defend and improve the Maine Clean Election Act and related campaign finance law. We have been at this work since the 1990's. Whenever there is legislation relating to our campaign finance and reporting system, MCCE works to bring the point of view of Maine citizens to the decision-making table.

We thank Senator Gratwick for bringing forward LD 383, and we support the bill. On February 4th I testified on LD 53, An Act To Require Shareholder Consent for Corporate Political Contributions. That testimony is available to you, so I won't repeat it now, but our main point is that we hear from many people who are concerned about the increasing influence corporations have in our elections. There is a perception that corporations are able to use their money to influence campaigns in a way that is undemocratic with a small "d."

Many large corporations are job creators, but they also allow a few people to control a lot of money, and when it comes to campaigns, this can pose problems for our democracy. LD 383 would at least ensure that the owners of the corporation, and not merely the managers, play a role in the political expression of the entity which they own.

When we talk with the public, we hear a concern for accountability; for government that is responsive to the voters. We are committed to defending the Clean Election system approved by voters because it is our best chance to protect the idea of "government of, by, and for the people." LD 383 will help address one of the factors that can interfere with that important principle.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We would be happy to address any questions you may have.