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To: Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs  
Date: Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Re: LD 1290, "An Act to Repeal the Maine Clean Election Act..."

I am Alison Smith, a longtime volunteer with Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. My testimony is in **strong opposition to LD 1290**, a bill to repeal the Maine Clean Election Act.

Twenty years ago, Maine people put the finishing touches on a ballot initiative that would break new ground in the world of campaign finance reform.

A few months later, I got a call asking whether I would be interested in collecting signatures to qualify this initiative for the ballot, and I eagerly said yes. That is because the Maine Clean Election Act, which existed only on paper, spoke to me in a big way. Among all other reforms under discussion at the time, only Clean Elections provided opportunity to make our democracy stronger.

Although I never set out to make campaign reform my life's work, I have been at it since Election Day of 1995, and there is clearly much more to do. One thing I have learned during that time is that I am not alone. Maine people believe in self-governance, and they believe in doing what it takes to make democracy work.

It is evident at Town Meetings, on municipal boards, and on Election Day. It is evident in our robust civic life and inclusive political culture. And it is evident in every poll, every survey, in every attempt to quantify Maine's support for Clean Elections.

Clean Elections didn't just appear overnight. It is the result of years of dedicated work by Maine people. And once it became law – the first such law in the country – it became more and more popular with voters and candidates alike.

Many on this committee and more than half of this bill's sponsors used and benefited from Clean Elections. It provided you with the chance to run credible races for legislative seats without raising and spending a lot of money. It let you spend your campaign talking with and listening to your future constituents.

Over the years, the national landscape for campaign finance law has changed dramatically, and our Clean Election Act has suffered some damage as a result. But that has only made Maine people more committed to Clean Elections and the potential for this law to better our democracy.

When 1,000 volunteers spend the summer and fall talking with friends and neighbors about Clean Elections – that's commitment.

When more than 80,000 Maine voters sign a petition to change campaign finance laws – they care about strengthening their democracy.

When the news media reminds us daily of the fights in Augusta between big-money interests and the priorities of everyday Mainers – it's clear that we must not give up.

This bill is, frankly, a slap in the face to the stalwart and dedicated commitment of Maine people to having elections and government of, by, and for the people. It should be stopped in its tracks with a unanimous vote of Ought Not to Pass in this committee.

I ask you to honor the will of Maine voters – expressed over and over again for two decades – and protect Clean Elections from this wholesale attack. We want not just to have Clean Elections, but to restore the law to its former strength. Voters will have their chance to reaffirm their support this fall, and to bring new transparency and accountability to our campaign finance laws in the process.

For the last eight election cycles, Maine's candidates have had a Clean Election option, and most have chosen to use it. Future voters and candidates deserve Clean Elections, too.

I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1290.

Thank you.

Alison Smith