



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 370 – An Act to Amend the Lobbyist Disclosure Procedures Law

Monday, March 2, 2015

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

My name is Bob Howe of Howe, Cahill & Company, and I am here today 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. Whenever there is legislation relating to our campaign finance and reporting system, MCCE strives to represent the interests of Maine citizens in a truly representative and democratic system.

Our lobbyist disclosure laws are a very important part of our overall disclosure system, and I say that as a veteran lobbyist of many years in the State House. LD 370 will enhance the disclosure laws by allowing a lobbyist, and not just the employer, to terminate a lobbying registration; by making it easier to submit registration information electronically; and by ensuring that lobbyist fees are used for the purpose of enhancing public disclosure of lobbyist and campaign finance reporting.

All of these are welcomed changes and we don't think they should be controversial. Jonathan Wayne and the Ethics Commission have made these proposals based on their long experience in this area, and we concur that they are needed.

Finally, we would briefly note that lobbyist registration fees can be construed as a tax on First Amendment expression. Some courts have warned against using taxes on First Amendment expression to raise funds for general revenue purposes. LD 370 would address the concerns raised by those courts.

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