



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

LD 532, An Act To Prohibit Maine Clean Election Act Candidates from Accepting Special Interest Money through a Political Party or Political Action Committee

Monday, March 30, 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 532, An Act To Prohibit Maine Clean Election Act Candidates from Accepting Special Interest Money through a Political Party or Political Action Committee. My name is John Brautigam, 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.

MCCE has been working to protect and advance the integrity of our election system for 20 years. We strongly support reforming the system of leadership PACs. The public is demanding reform.

Personal leadership PAC fundraising in large dollar amounts is simply bad for democracy. But don't take our word for it. Senator Brakey's bill calls it "special interest money." One representative who testified on a previous bill called it "legalized bribery." Another said, "money buys influence." Other comments referred to "dirty" politicians and the "cancer" on our democracy.

Again, these are not the words chosen by my organization. These are the words of legislators who are part of this system. This practice simply has to change.

We will offer more comments when testifying on LD 619. For now, we simply urge you not to create new problems by carving out a loophole for special interest money given to privately funded candidates. You have the chance to stop the "legal bribery" and cure the "cancer" on our democracy. Don't settle for a bill that goes only half way. Don't punish Clean Elections candidates for trying to minimize the problem of special interest money. No more leadership PACs. Period.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.