

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

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TO: The Honorable Senator Lisa T. Marraché, Senate Chair
The Honorable Representative John L. Patrick, House Chair
The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs

DATE: April 18, 2007

RE: **LD 1233** "An Act to Amend Requirements for Participation of Gubernatorial Candidates under the Maine Clean Election Act"

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) testifies neither for nor against LD 1233.

Now that the second round of gubernatorial elections has been run using a Clean Election option for candidates, we agree that the time is right to tweak the system somewhat. While the qualifying process proved to be a stringent test in 2006 with many candidates attempting to qualify but failing to complete certification, we believe the bar should be set just a little bit higher for 2010. We want to make sure that the process remains a good measure of grassroots support for candidates so that the public can be sure that only truly viable candidates receive public money. With each successful round of Clean Elections, candidates and the public have become more familiar with the system, and it is clear that the process of gathering \$5 Qualifying Contributions gets a bit easier with each cycle.

We agree with raising the number of Qualifying Contributions that candidates must collect, but are reluctant to go as high as Representative Valentino proposes. Our coalition agrees that a 30% hike, to 3,250 Qualifying Contributions, is a significant but acceptable number, but anything above that is too high.

MCCE does not support the idea of mandatory seed money. The Maine Clean Election Act is a full public funding system that allows candidates to run for office without raising private money. Seed money is an optional provision that allows candidates who so choose to raise a very limited amount of private money in small increments in order to get their campaigns off the ground before receiving public money.

It is unlikely that a candidate could complete the qualifying process for the governor's race without at least some seed money, but we do not think that raising private money is an appropriate mandate for a full public funding system. Some believe that the ability to raise money is a key part of the viability test, but we disagree. Collecting Qualifying Contributions from supportive voters and fully documenting that support is the test, and we assume that there are as many ways to go about that as there are candidates who will try it. We do not believe that demanding that a certain amount of private money be raised will improve the process or better ensure that only candidates with broad support will ultimately qualify.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections is a nonpartisan coalition of organizations that have worked together to pass Maine's Clean Election Act and that continue to work together to support and defend its use and the integrity of its implementation. Its members include AARP, Common Cause Maine, the League of Women Voters of Maine, Maine AFL-CIO, Maine People's Alliance and Peace Action Maine.