

# 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 1317** "An Act to Require a Minimum Number of Votes in a Primary to Continue to Qualify as a Maine Clean Election Act Candidate"

## **Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) testifies in opposition to LD 1317.**

MCCE believes that the provision in LD 1317 is unnecessary. The qualifying process determines whether a candidate enjoys enough support within the district to merit public funds. Additionally, party candidates must win their primary races in order to receive funds in the general election.

We appreciate that Representative Pendleton is attempting to get at the question of viability which is an important one when it comes to spending public funds on candidate races. We have put a lot of effort into evaluating various ideas that would strengthen the qualifying process as a measure of genuine support because we share the concern that public money could go to nonviable candidates who really do not enjoy much support.

We believe the qualifying process is where the viability test must take place. Not all candidates have primaries, but all must engage in a qualifying process. Party candidates, unenrolled candidates, replacement candidates and candidates in special elections all are eligible for public funding if they qualify. It seems arbitrary to single out party candidates for additional hurdles.

Since a winning candidate will represent all voters in a particular district, we believe it is somewhat irrelevant how many votes the candidate receives within their own local party during the primary. If they are in a contested race and they win, then it hardly seems to matter if the number is large or small. If they are uncontested it is easy to see why voter turnout might be quite low, and we don't think it fair that a qualified candidate could lose their certification because of it.

We urge you to vote "Ought not to pass" on LD 1317. At the same time, we look forward to working with you and with the sponsors of the bill to fine tune the qualifying process to make sure that the limited dollars we have for the Clean Election program only go to well-qualified candidates.