

# 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 23, 2007

RE: **LD 1680** "An Act to Reform and Simplify the Clean Election Process"

## **Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) opposes LD 1680.**

LD 1680 calls for a complete overhaul of the Clean Election system. MCCE believes the Clean Election system works very well and is not in need of significant change.

Since the program went into effect in 2000, participation has increased with each election cycle. That is because the system works. The success of the pioneering candidates who participated in 2000 gave other candidates the confidence to try the new system, and participation is now above 80 percent. Survey research has shown a high level of satisfaction with the system and enthusiasm about both using it again and recommending it to other candidates. This is no time to change the now-familiar system so dramatically that all candidates, advisors, campaign managers and treasurers would have to learn a new system for the 2008 races.

MCCE believes that the way to build on the success of Clean Elections is to identify the few problems that are widespread and serious and make targeted modifications to make our successful system even better.

There are a couple of provisions in this bill that we support:

- ✓ We agree that it is appropriate to limit voters to making one qualifying contribution in a particular race. This strengthens the idea that qualifying contributions signal support for a particular candidate. A similar provision is included in LD 1724.
- ✓ We also agree that public funds may never be used for expenses that are incurred during the qualifying period. We believe that current law already prohibits this, but do not object to language that would clarify such an important point.

We appreciate the proposed extension of the "rebuttable presumption" period for reporting of independent expenditures, but believe that 42 days is too long before the primary

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*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.*

election and too short before the general election. We recommend simply extending the period prior to the general election to 60 days.

On all other provisions, we respectfully disagree with Senator Mills. Particular concerns are

- the measures that are aimed at discouraging unenrolled candidates from participating in the Clean Election option. It is inappropriate to set the bar higher for those candidates simply because they are not members of an established political party,
- allowing privately funded candidates to receive public financing, and
- the wholesale changes to the qualifying process which could undercut several accountability measures currently in the law.

We urge a vote of "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1680, and hope the committee will focus on a few necessary changes that will make our fine public funding system even better.