

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

P.O. Box 18187, Portland, ME 04112
www.mainelection.org

(207) 664-0696 (Ann Luther, co-chair)
(207) 879-7440 (Alison Smith, co-chair)
info@mainelection.org

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 1740** "An Act to Amend the Maine Clean Election Act"

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) strongly opposes LD 1740.

This bill increases the contribution limits to privately funded candidates, doubling it for gubernatorial and State House candidates, and tripling it for State Senate candidates.

We see no rationale for increasing contribution limits. There is absolutely no evidence that privately funded candidates are unable to raise adequate resources to run vigorous campaigns. By way of evidence, we point out that in 2006 one State House candidate raised approximately \$38,000 and the governor raised more than \$1.2 million under the current limits.

Contribution limits are in place so that Maine citizens can be confident that campaign contributors can not exercise undue influence over any state elected official. The limits that are in place were subjected to a robust legal challenge that concluded just seven years ago, and they were found to be fully constitutional. We believe the limits are right and that they serve the public very well.

The Maine Clean Election Act is a full public funding system. That means that candidates can run for office without raising private money. While it does allow for a very limited amount of optional private money to be raised early in the campaign, the basic idea is that qualified candidates do not have to engage in private fundraising at all either in their primary or general election races.

LD 1740 would turn that upside down by requiring private money to be raised and by cutting a critical provision – matching funds – out of the primary races. In addition, the bill fails to limit the amount of private money that could be raised, although it allows the Ethics Commission to make rules that would do so. This is an enormous expansion of the seed money system, one that is neither appropriate nor acceptable.

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.

This bill burdens Clean Election candidates with private fundraising obligations above and beyond the rules for traditionally funded candidates. Only Clean Election candidates would not be able to accept a donation from an individual who resides in a different House or Senate district, or from another state in the case of gubernatorial candidates. Only Clean Election candidates would have to raise a significant amount of money before April 15th of the election year. With the ban on in-session fundraising that exists in current law, this would force candidates to gear up their fundraising effort a year before the election. There is absolutely no benefit to any of these provisions.

LD 1740 is an ill-conceived bill that would undermine our top-notch full public funding system, and we urge the committee to vote "Ought NOT to Pass."