



**TO:** The Honorable Senator Nancy B. Sullivan, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Representative Pamela Jabar Trinward, House Chair  
The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs

**DATE:** April 6, 2009

**RE:** **LD 1247** "An Act to Prohibit Maine Clean Election Act Candidates from Raising Private Campaign Funds," Representative Giles, sponsor

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**Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) opposes LD 1247. This bill is virtually indistinguishable from LD 140 which was heard earlier in the session.**

MCCE believes that strong campaign finance laws should work to reduce the influence of big money in government, eliminate corruption and the appearance of corruption, increase public access to information, and allow candidates to compete more equitably for public office. We hold that sound reform creates trust, encourages participation in our electoral system, and enhances the accountability of elected officials to their constituents.

Maine has been largely successful in getting the big money out of the campaigns of candidates for state office for two reasons: 1) An option for full public funding and 2) reasonable contribution limits for privately funded candidates.

We understand the concerns that are raised when candidates participating in the Clean Election public funding system also establish and participate in fundraising for political action committees (PAC). Although there are only a few candidates in each cycle who choose to have a PAC, in too many instances PAC funds are raised from exactly the same special interest groups that our public funding system was designed to avoid. At the same time, we also have concerns about privately funded candidates who may raise additional funds from their campaign contributors – without limit – into their PAC, potentially making a mockery of existing contribution limits.

**Member Organizations**

AARP Maine, Common Cause Maine, EqualityMaine, League of Women Voters of Maine, League of Young Voters, Maine AFL-CIO, Maine Council of Churches, Maine People's Alliance/Maine People's Resource Center, Maine Women's Lobby, NAACP-Portland, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Peace Action Maine

Although we understand and share the sponsor's concerns, we object to the proposed solution. If you begin by barring Maine Clean Election Act candidates from raising money for PACs, would you then prohibit them from raising money for their party? The rationale would be the same. Were LD 1247 to pass, candidates who wish to engage in the perfectly legal fundraising activities of PACs would simply opt out of the Clean Election system and raise private money for their own campaign and for PACs. This would in no way lessen the influence of big money on Maine politics, and so would have absolutely no benefit to Maine's citizens.

A better approach is to look at the PAC system as a whole, and not simply at one class of candidates' participation in it. Big money still plays a role in Maine politics, mainly because Maine has no contribution limits to PACs. We are unique in New England in this regard. We are pleased that Representative Trinward has sponsored LD 583 this session to introduce contribution limits and other reforms, and we anticipate a constructive dialogue about how to best bring Maine's PAC laws in line with our generally excellent campaign finance statutes.

The best reforms will lessen the influence of big money in Maine races, preserve the disclosure that PACs provide, and protect the First Amendment rights of speech and association that are the bedrock of our political system. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance these goals.

Thank you.

Alison Smith, Co-chair  
879-7440