



TO: Commission on Governmental and Election Practices  
FROM: Alison Smith and Ann Luther, Co-chairs  
DATE: June 24, 2010  
RE: Recent Poll

Thank you for the opportunity to present the findings of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections' recent poll on disclosure. While MCCE has long considered disclosure to be a fundamental building block of campaign finance law with a strong public interest component, given its centrality to legal disputes in Maine and around the country, we thought it wise to challenge our own assumptions and find out what the public thinks.

Finding a dearth of existing polling data, we commissioned Critical Insights, a nonpartisan public policy polling firm based in Maine, to conduct a poll to explore public sentiment on campaign finance disclosure. More than 400 telephone interviews were conducted with active Maine voters in April of this year.

The results show very strong support for all dimensions of transparency in Maine's campaign finance law. Even when tested against other values such as confidentiality and privacy, respondents placed a higher value on the public interest. Here are just a few highlights of the poll.

- **Voters believe that the names of political groups and donors should be available to the public.**

More than 80% of Maine voters believe that having the names of donors to political organizations available to the public is important because it keeps the process open and transparent. Broken down by political party, gender, age, education and income, all voter groups strongly support transparency over confidentiality. Whether or not the voter would use the information her/himself, strong majorities favor public disclosure.

- **Voters want to know who pays for campaign ads.**

85% of voters feel it is important to know who paid for the political campaign communications they see or hear. Knowing the name of an organization is not enough; voters want to know who finances and leads the group. About three quarters of those polled said that knowing who pays and who is behind the organization that pays helps them determine the credibility of the advertisement.

- **Voters value the information that disclosure provides.**

Huge majorities of voters think it is important to know who gives to political campaigns, whether the contributors stand to gain from the result of the election, whether they are from Maine or from out-of-state, and the size of the contributions. For most voters, this information affects what they think and how they choose to vote.

Since transparency is at the heart of the Ethics Commission's work, we hope you will find this information to be helpful. It's clear that whether political spending is for a candidate or a ballot question, Maine voters value their right to information about the source of funding for advertisements and other communications. We believe the results forcefully underscore the importance of protecting the public interest in campaign finance law.

#### **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, Peace Action Maine, Sierra Club