



TO: The Honorable Senator Nichi Farnham, Senate Chair
The Honorable Representative Michael Beaulieu, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: April 29, 2011

RE: LD 1100 An Act To Increase Transparency in Funding of Campaign Advertisements
Sponsored by Senator Brian Langley

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections offers testimony in support of LD 1100.

MCCE believes that this bill is a modest proposal that would work to accomplish one of the important aspirations of strong campaign finance law: it would increase public access to vital information and help voters more honestly assess the political advertising that they see and hear.

Last year's state elections saw an unprecedented level of independent spending in Maine's legislative races. In the post-*Citizens United* political environment, we are sure to see more of this in the future, not less. Furthermore, Maine is the only state in New England and one of the few states in the nation that has no limits on contributions to PACs, so we are an easy target for big out-of-state money looking for a way to influence elections. Disclosure and disclaimer are among the few, very important tools left open to citizens to curb the influence of big money in elections and provide voters with the information they need to make informed decisions about candidates.

We would happily support even stronger disclaimer requirements on this kind of advertising. That might include the identities of top donors and statements of accountability by key decision makers. But anytime the state requires new disclaimers of this kind, it runs the risk of raising a free speech challenge for imposing unnecessary burdens on highly-protected political speech. In truth, even the modest proposal put forward here raises the possibility of such a challenge since the TV disclaimer is duplicative and will shave precious seconds off broadcast ads.

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 State Employees Association/SEIU Local 1989, Maine Women's Lobby, NAACP-Portland, Sierra Club Maine Chapter

But Senator Langley's proposal is based on common sense, which is usually a good place to start. It is easy to understand, and it ensures that voters don't have to hear an entire ad or read the fine print to see or hear the important disclaimer. For those reasons it seems like a very practical proposal. LD 1100 moves Maine law in the right direction, it's good for voters, and we encourage you to vote Ought to Pass on this bill.

Ann Luther, Co-president

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