



TO: The Honorable Craig Hickman  
The Honorable Laura Supica, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: March 15, 2023

RE: LD 790 - An Act to Require Disclosure for Communications Paid for Using Maine Clean Election Act Funding

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Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee.

My name is Paul Lavin. I am a resident of Winthrop. I am here today as a volunteer on behalf of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections to testify in opposition to LD 790.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over twenty years and one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections and campaign finance laws that serve the public interest. We are proud of our national reputation. But we are all Mainers, and our nonpartisan mission has always been with and for the people of this State.

The Maine Clean Election Act (MCEA) has been supported by Maine voters by significant margins in 1996 when it was enacted by citizen initiative and in 2015 when the people went back to the polls to reinforce and improve the program after the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the matching funds provision in the Act. Over three thousand candidates have participated in the MCEA program since 2000. In every election cycle since 2000, tens of thousands of Maine voters have made qualifying contributions to support candidates using the program. And every year, thousands of Mainers show their support for the program by using the tax check off on the state tax form. Citizens of this State from all walks of life and from all political parties and independents support the Maine Clean Election Act.

The popularity of the MCEA program is also reflected in the utilization rates by members of this and previous Legislatures. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the members of this Legislature ran as clean election candidates in 2022.

Candidates for state office have a choice about how to fund their campaigns. They may use their own money, they may raise private funds, or they may participate in the Maine Clean Election Act program. All are equally lawful and legitimate ways to fund campaigns.

Prior to an election, candidates are required to file several detailed reports of all their financial activity, including the sources of their funding. All campaign communications require a disclosure statement stating who paid for the ad. These requirements apply to all candidates equally, regardless of how they fund their campaigns. The disclosure statement and reports make comprehensive campaign finance information readily available to the public.

L.D. 790 singles out MCEA candidates for an additional disclosure statement on all campaign communications. This is both unnecessary and discriminatory. The current disclosure requirements serve the public interest well and are even-handed. We urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on L.D. 790.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be glad to answer any questions the Committee may have.