



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices

RE: Request for Recommendation from the Appropriations Committee on Continued Funding for Gubernatorial Candidates under the Maine Clean Elections Act

The League of Women Voters urges you today to recommend continued public funding for candidates for governor in 2010 and beyond. Failure to continue this support for gubernatorial candidates would be an enormous loss to the public good and would erode the landmark reform embodied in the Maine Clean Elections Act. It would be an unconscionable breach of public trust to do so through the budget process without a full and open public debate.

The Maine Clean Elections Act was on the ballot in 1996, a Presidential election year when Maine ranked #1 nationwide in voter turnout. This measure passed with 56% of the vote. More Maine voters (320,755) said "yes" to this ballot question than have voted for any winning gubernatorial candidate in the last fifteen years.

The financial stability of this critical program has already been eroded through past borrowing from, and failure to repay, the Maine Clean Elections Fund. The Maine Clean Elections Fund should be fully funded, and borrowed funds should be restored.

The League of Women Voters believes in public funding for elections at both the national and state level. The League's position on Campaign Finance reflects our continuing concern for open and honest elections and for maximum citizen participation in the political process.

The League's position is that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and allow maximum participation in the political process.

The Maine Clean Elections Act works to accomplish these important goals. Maine's public financing system is an exemplar of good government practice to be emulated in other states around the country and at the federal level. The annualized cost of public financing in Maine is truly modest in light of the fundamental public benefit it provides.

We urge you to recommend in support of continued public funding of gubernatorial candidates under the Maine Clean Elections Act.

Ann Luther, President
League of Women Voters of Maine
April 5, 2007

The League of Women Voters has been a leader in seeking campaign finance reform at the state and federal levels for more than three decades. The League was a founding member of the coalition now called Maine Citizens for Clean Elections that worked to pass the landmark Maine Clean Elections Act just over ten years ago.