



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Garrett Mason
The Honorable Representative Louis Luchini, Co-chairs
The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: February 7, 2017

RE: LD 126 - An Act To Establish New Monetary Caps for Legislative Candidates
under the Maine Clean Election Act

My name is Ann Luther. I am a member of the Advocacy Committee for the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am a resident of Trenton. I am here today as a volunteer in opposition to LD 126, which would decrease by one-third the amount of distributions to candidates participating in the Maine Clean Election Act.

The League of Women Voters has been a champion of campaign finance reform at the state and federal levels for more than three decades. The League is proud to have been a founding member of the broad-based, nonpartisan coalition that drafted the Maine Clean Election Act and collected 65,000 signatures in 1995 to put the citizens' initiative before the voters in 1996.

In the last few years, disastrous court decisions and damaging legislative action and inaction have weakened the Maine Clean Election Act, but more than ever before, Maine people want strong measures to keep government responsive to the people, not just to wealthy donors. Two years ago, League members were among the hundreds of volunteers once again taking matters into their own hands to protect the Maine Clean Election Act. We circulated petitions to collecting 81,000 signatures to put a ballot measure before the people in 2015 to strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act.

Maine's public financing system is a shining example of best 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 – about \$3 per person per year – especially in light of the fundamental public benefit it provides.

This is a system of opportunity – it creates opportunity for citizen participation in government. It creates opportunity for ordinary people from all walks of life to run for state office, wage competitive campaigns without ties to moneyed interests, and win. Since the program's inception in 2000, it has been embraced by Democrats, Republicans, Greens, and independents for its ability to help recruit high-quality candidates to run for state office. The availability of Clean Elections is often cited by candidates as a critical factor in their decision to run.

In order for Clean Elections to work the way Maine people want it to work, it has to work for all types of candidates – for incumbents and challengers, for candidates in open seat races, and particularly for candidates in competitive races. What is the point of having public funding that only works for candidates in safe districts who don't really need much money to win?

Cutting the distributions to candidates as proposed in this bill creates an incumbency protection program, not a program of opportunity. Of the nineteen candidates for both the House and Senate who qualified for the top funding levels under the new supplemental funding system, fourteen were not incumbents. Considering a range of factors (incumbency, presence of IEs, close vote total), fully eighteen of the nineteen candidates in these top brackets were in competitive races.

This is working the way Maine people want it to work – creating opportunity for a wide range of candidates to run competitive races for state office regardless of party affiliation and regardless of ties to lobbyists or other moneyed interests – based solely on support from the people in their district.

We urge you vote Ought Not To Pass on LD 126.

Chamber	# GE Tranches	Clean Election Candidate	CE Amt	BDN Toss UP +	Close Vote Total*	High IE's #	Not Incumbent
SENATE	8	JACKSON TROY DALE	\$60,000		♥	♣	♠
	8	WHITTEMORE RODNEY	\$60,000	♦		♣	
	8	O'NEILL MOIRA	\$60,000			♣	♠
	8	FULFORD JONATHAN	\$60,000	♦	♥	♣	♠
	8	MIRAMANT DAVID	\$60,000	♦	♥		
	8	BELLOWS SHENNA	\$60,000	♦			♠
	8	SAVIELLO THOMAS	\$60,000				
	7	GUERRETTE TIMOTHY	\$55,000		♥	♣	♠
	7	CATERINA JEAN-MARIE	\$55,000	♦			♠
HOUSE	8	FITZGERALD RICHARD	\$15,000				♠
	8	TIMMONS MICHAEL	\$15,000	♦		♣	
	8	DENNO DALE	\$15,000	♦		♣	♠
	8	BERRY SETH	\$15,000	♦		♣	♠
	8	GOLDBERG ELINORE	\$15,000				♠
	8	PICKETT RICHARD	\$15,000			♣	
	8	PEW SIDNEY	\$15,000				♠
	8	MCCREA DAVID	\$15,000			♣	♠
	7	LAUZON DANIEL	\$13,439				♠
	7	WOLF WENDY	\$13,750			♣	♠

+Mike Shepherd in the BDN, May 20, 2016, <https://bangordailynews.com/2016/05/20/the-point/for-republicans-a-tough-road-to-hold-onto-maine-senate-majority/?ref=relatedBox>

* 4% or less

#Top 10 in Senate and top 30 in House.