

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

DATE: April 30, 2025

RE: LD 1787 - An Act to Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act

Good afternoon Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs.

My name is Chris Cayer and I'm a political director from Stratton, Maine. I have been working on democracy reform issues in Maine for the past 10 years. I currently serve as a director for a nationwide advocacy group focused on campaign finance reform and I am a member of the state committee for the Maine Green Independent Party.

The first campaign that I ever worked on was a referendum in 2015 to strengthen Maine's clean election system. I had the chance to speak with thousands of Mainers about our system of public financing and it was clear that Maine people hold the system in high regard. That referendum passed with overwhelming support from the Maine electorate.

Since 2015, I've managed several electoral and legislative campaigns, working with candidates and elected officials around the state. Politicians across the political spectrum support and use Maine's clean election system. According to the Maine Citizens for Clean Elections, 64% of elected officials in Maine use the public financing system. In conversations with these individuals, they report spending more time knocking on doors and talking to constituents and less time holding fundraisers and dialing for dollars.

Political spending in Maine and around the country has skyrocketed in recent years. In 2020, Maine saw a \$200 million Senate race which shattered all previous spending records. In 2021, over \$90 million was poured into a ballot campaign, marking the most expensive referendum in Maine's history. In 2023 and 2024, Mainers passed two different referendums calling for a solution to the out-of-control problem of money in

politics. One passed with 86% support and the other passed with 75% support. The *overwhelming* majority of Mainers want solutions that address this urgent issue.

LD 1787 will expand Clean Elections for candidates running for sheriff, district attorney, and county commissioner. This is vitally important as big donors and out-of-state interests are increasingly investing in local campaigns. Between 2014 and 2022, total spending in races for sheriff, district attorney, and county commissioner have more than doubled.

Expanding the use of Clean Elections will ensure that all candidates have an opportunity to run for these offices, not just the wealthy and well-connected. It will also ensure that these elections are not put up for sale to the highest bidder. I urge you to stand with the Maine people and vote in favor of LD 1787.

Thank you for your time.

Christopher Cayer

Stratton, Maine

April 30,, 2025

Testifying in Support of LD 1787

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Maine_Question_1

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Maine_Question_1

[https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_Question_2_Prohibit_Foreign_Spending_in_Elections_Initiative_\(2023\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_Question_2_Prohibit_Foreign_Spending_in_Elections_Initiative_(2023))

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Stratton
LD 1787

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