



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **Testimony of Representative David Boyer**

### **Presenting L.D. 833 An Act to Prohibit Persons Who Donate to a Governor's Transition Committee and Inaugural Committee from Registering as Lobbyists**

#### **Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Representative David Boyer, and I am pleased to present L.D. 833 An Act to Prohibit Persons Who Donate to a Governor's Transition Committee and Inaugural Committee from Registering as Lobbyists. I am grateful to have Democratic, Independent, and Republican support for this bill.

As you may know, a Governor-elect may raise money for their transition and inauguration- two separate committees. These committees can raise unlimited contributions from individuals, corporations, organizations, and PACs until March 31 of the year following the gubernatorial election.

After a change in state law in 2015, the donations to these committees must be reported to the Ethics Commission. The 2018 election for governor was the first time the donations were required to be reported. Governor Mill's committees raised over \$400,000. The biggest donors were corporations such as paper companies, cannabis dispensaries, clean energy companies, health insurers, casinos, and lobbying firms.

I believe the single largest donation was \$25,000, which came from Wellness Connection of Maine, a multi-state cannabis business. Remember this was in 2018 and large cannabis companies wanted a seat at the table as the adult-use cannabis laws were being crafted.

To be clear, I am not trying to make this a partisan issue. I am sure many of these same large corporations would have donated to the Moody or LePage committee's if they had won.

In-fact, in 2010, the LePage campaign voluntarily disclosed the donors, but not the amounts, to his committee. There is much overlap between LePage and Mills donors including corporations like Anthem, Sappi, and UNUM. Lobbying firms like Eaton Peabody, Drummond Woodsum, and Bernstein Shur gave to both Mills and LePage.

In my humble opinion, this seems akin to legalized bribery. Now, it is one thing to donate to a candidate, hoping they win and will implement a like-minded agenda.

**It's an entirely different animal to donate to a candidate who has already won!** Supporters of the current system would argue that there are safeguards in place, like the prohibition of these committees to accept donations from lobbyists while the Legislature is in session. While this is true, it's clear that it hasn't stopped the flow of funds to these committees.

To circumvent this law, lobbyists simply wait a few weeks to register with the Ethics Commission as a lobbyist! You see, lobbyist registrations expire in November of each year, allowing lobbyist to let their registrations lapse before contributing and registering with the State again.

This legislation would strengthen current law by prohibiting a person from registering as a lobbyist or engaging in activities that require registration as a lobbyist or lobbyist associate if the person has contributed to the transitional committee or inaugural committee or expenses of a Governor-elect. This prohibition would be in effect for the length of the term served by Governor-elect as Governor.

Allowing lobbyists to continue to donate through this loophole will erode public trust and confidence in how our state government is run.

Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.