

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE

ON VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

IN SUPPORT OF

LD 2232

**“AN ACT TO LIMIT CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES
THAT MAKE INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES”**

Good afternoon, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Adam Cote, I am an attorney at Drummond Woodsum. I am here to testify in favor of LD 2232, “An Act to Limit Contributions to Political Action Committees That Make Independent Expenditures.”

I have been working with Professor Larry Lessig and his organization, Equal Citizens, and Cara McCormick’s Ballot Question Committee, Citizens to End SuperPACs to get this issue before Maine voters as a referendum in the November election.

As an attorney, I find this bill fascinating because although, from a drafting perspective, it is remarkably simple – limiting to \$5,000 per year the amount of contributions by individuals, PACs and businesses to PACs that make independent expenditures – yet this simple bill effectively works to challenge the lower courts’ interpretation to the Supreme Court’s decisions in *Buckley v Valeo* and *Citizen’s United*.

As a former candidate for statewide office, I find this bill enormously important to help limit the disproportionate role single donors have in our election process. This is an issue I dealt with in the most personal of ways having spent the better part of two years trying to raise campaign funds with a \$1,600 per donor limit only to have a SuperPAC formed two weeks before the primary election to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars against my campaign.

But the biggest reason I am supportive of this initiative is because I am a citizen of the State and great country and like many of you, I am concerned about our democracy. Democracies are very fragile and, in our country, today – regardless of your political beliefs – I think you can acknowledge that wealthy donors contributing to SuperPACs is one of the most corrupting and truly undemocratic forces that enjoys a grossly disproportionate share of influence over our election process. While this bill does not solve all of those problems, I believe it is a large step forward. And as a final point, I think that this November's election could likely be the most divisive one in our country's history – which is saying a lot. I kind of like the idea of having Mainers going to the polls this November with at least one unifying issue they can all agree upon.

I would be happy to answer any of your questions.