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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs on
LD 2232, An Act to Limit Contributions to Political Action Committees That Make
Independent Expenditures
March 6, 2024**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to speak in favor of LD 2232, “An Act to Limit Contributions to Political Action Committees That Make Independent Expenditures.”

Our politics is broken. Our government is corrupted by money and large donors. The nation we love is imperiled. Profound changes are needed. LD 2232 could provide one of the solutions to save our country.

As you know from my work on earlier bills before your committee, I am very passionate about reforming our campaign finance system. There are serious issues with money’s influence on our democracy. I worry that a small number of people have too much influence on our politics.

The bill before you comes from the people of Maine who overwhelming agree with this sentiment. Indeed, 76,081 Mainers have petitioned their legislature to ask us for action. And act we must.

Voters are tired of the incredible amounts of spending done during election season, increasingly by dark money sources. Maine voters continue to support Clean Elections, which is an attempt to get big money out of our politics. However, despite our Clean Election laws, political action committees are allowed to spend unlimited amounts in support or against Clean Election candidates.

People are fed up and motivated to fix this problem. The petition to get this proposal before you began circulating at the end of last October. It took a mere three months for advocates to collect and turn in 76,081 valid signatures from across the state. The people of Maine deserve and want a political system both free of corruption and the appearance of corruption.

Furthermore, this proposal is popular. According to an October 2023 Pew Research Center, 72% of US adults believe that there should be limits on the amount of money individuals and organizations can spend on political campaigns. Only 11% believe individuals and organizations should be able to spend as much as they want and 16% are unsure. Additionally, 80% of US adults believe people who donate money to political campaigns have too much influence on decisions their elected officials make.

The Legislature should enact this law now. It is one of the best changes we can make to improve the accessibility of our democracy. I have no doubt there will be legal challenges after its enactment – there always are by the monied interests eagerly protecting their entrenched power. But I am confident that we will win that legal battle. Harvard Law School’s Lawrence Lessig, who has been spearheading this effort, said, “SuperPACs have been with us for more than 13 years so it is understandable that most lawyers believe the Supreme Court has upheld them. It has not. Likewise, it is understandable that many political organizations, including reform organizations on the Left and Right, have become dependent on the super-wealthy to do their work. Some of them now support SuperPACs, as do many of the most wealthy in America who use SuperPACs to influence American politics. But we know that the vast majority of Americans on both the Left and Right hate the corruption of big money in American politics.”

Thank you for your time. I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2232 to give citizens the chance to get our democracy back.