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THE MAINE SENATE
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Chairs Hickman and Supica, esteemed members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs committee, thank you for the opportunity to present LD 390, a bill that ensures Maine's campaign finance laws reflect the realities of our election cycle and align with federal guidelines.

LD 390 is a simple matter of fairness. Under current law, unenrolled candidates—those who qualify for the ballot by petition rather than through a party primary—must campaign for just as long and with the same demands as their party-affiliated opponents, yet they face an uneven playing field when it comes to fundraising. Federal election law recognizes this by allowing independent candidates to access the same contribution limits as primary-nominated candidates. Maine's current law does not.

This creates an imbalance in our system. Most serious independent candidates for major office in Maine either run as Clean Elections candidates or are self-funded. Why? Because under our current framework, a traditionally funded independent candidate would need contributions from twice as many donors as a party candidate to receive the same amount of financial support. That's regardless of whether the party candidate even has a primary challenger. Meanwhile, in Clean Elections, the state already recognizes the equal burden of early campaigning by granting independents the same pre-primary funding as an uncontested party candidate. LD 390 brings the traditionally funded system in line with that same logic.

Now, I anticipate some concerns from the committee, and I want to address them directly:

- **"Independents don't need the same level of funding because they don't have a primary election."**

In reality, independent candidates must campaign at the same pace and for the same length of time as their party-affiliated opponents. They cannot—and do not—simply wait until after the June primary to start running. That's why the FEC grants them access to the primary contribution limit, and Maine should follow suit. Additionally parties can and do spend money to support their candidates, and independents don't have that same institutional support.

- **"If we're adjusting contribution limits for traditionally funded candidates, shouldn't we also look at Clean Elections?"**

This bill is specifically focused on leveling the playing field for traditionally funded candidates. The structure of Clean Elections funding is a separate conversation.

- **“I don’t want to increase the role of money in politics.”**

I agree that money in politics is a concern. But within the system we have, the rules must be fair. Right now, unenrolled candidates face a structural disadvantage, and LD 390 corrects that inequity.

Maine has a long tradition of strong independent candidates. It’s time our campaign finance laws reflect that reality. I urge the committee to support LD 390 to ensure fairness and competitive elections.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that the League of Women Voters/MCCE will be providing views on a slightly different approach to this issue than that in LD 390. They have some good thoughts that I would like to explore with them and this committee with a view toward coming together on a fair and workable solution.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions.