



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

DATE: February 24, 2025

RE: LD 390: An Act to Raise the Contribution Cap for Unenrolled Candidates

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Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica.

My name is Al Cleveland, and I am the Advocacy Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. I am testifying against LD390.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over twenty years and one of the nation's most respected state-based organizations advocating for democratically funded elections. We are proud of our national reputation. But we are all Mainers, and our nonpartisan mission has always been with and for the people of this state.

LD 390 aims to create a level playing field for unenrolled candidates who do not compete in primary elections and therefore only have one election period to raise contributions. We appreciate Senator Brenner's attention to this issue. MCCE shares the goal of fairness for unenrolled candidates, but we support an alternative policy approach.

Let's use the example of an unenrolled legislative candidate who begins their campaign in February or March. For the whole election period until November, they have a cap of \$475 that they are allowed to accept from any one individual. A party candidate beginning at the same time, however, can raise that amount twice - once during the primary and once during the general election. We agree that isn't fair.

Doubling the contribution limit for unenrolled candidates is not the answer, however. During the general election, they could potentially raise twice as much as a party candidate, from the same number of donors. That isn't fair either.

Rather than changing the contribution limit, we suggest that the unenrolled candidate should have two election periods, concurrent with the primary and general elections. An unenrolled candidate that gets an early start and wants to begin campaigning in the spring could raise funds and begin to build connections and name recognition with voters at the same time as party candidates are doing the same. During the general election period, the contribution limit would reset for each donor, and the same limit would apply to both party and unenrolled candidates.

Unenrolled candidates that use Clean Elections receive the same amount of funding during the primary election as the party candidates who have uncontested primary elections. We believe it makes sense to apply this same standard to privately-financed candidates.

In summary, aligning the contribution limits for unenrolled candidates with the primary and general election would be a fairer approach to all candidates.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.