



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

DATE: Wednesday, April 30, 2025

RE: LD 1787: An Act to Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act

Good morning Senator Hickman and Representative Supica.

My name is Anna Kellar. I'm a resident of Portland. I am here today as the Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. I am testifying in support of LD 1787.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections has been the leading campaign finance organization in Maine for over twenty years, and is 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.

This year, 2025, marks the 25th anniversary of the first Clean Elections campaigns, and ten years since Maine voters reaffirmed their support for Clean Elections at the ballot box in the 2015 referendum. It is time to take the next steps for this landmark law: expanding Clean Elections to county government offices.

County elections are the only place where Mainers directly elect our law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other important offices in our justice system. Mainers need to be able to trust that sheriffs, district attorneys, and other county officials can carry out their duties impartially. Like judges, these officials must operate "without fear or favor." Direct elections can help ensure these offices are held accountable. But it also introduces the need for campaigns, and with that, campaign fundraising, and the potential for influence by campaign donors.

Historically, the majority of District Attorney campaigns are either self-funded (which is an issue of equity and opportunity) or funded by lawyers who expect to have cases within that district. Contributors to sheriffs include law enforcement associations — and more lawyers. Between 2014 and 2022, total spending has more than doubled in races for sheriff, DA, and county commissioner. The 2022 Cumberland County District Attorney contest alone cost more than \$76,000 and was a target for spending by out-of-state interests.

With judicial and local elections around the country becoming increasingly partisan and high-spending, Maine should take this chance to get ahead of the trend and insulate our justice system from potential corruption or the perception of corruption. By expanding the Maine Clean Elections Act to allow county-level candidates to use the program, we are ensuring that these offices do not go up for sale, but remain impartial and trustworthy in the eyes of the people they serve.

LD1787 ensures that Clean Elections is fully funded and reliable for legislative candidates as well. By adding to the statutory funding for Clean Elections, we insulate the program against rising costs, ensuring that it will remain an option into the future.

As you will see in the attached information from ~~with~~ the Ethics Commission, over the decades the Clean Elections Fund has been raided to pay for other priorities, and more than \$6 million has never been restored. Rather than relying on last-minute appropriations requests, that can dent candidates confidence in Clean Elections, the legislature should make this modest increase in the yearly funding, and ensure that Clean Elections is reliable into the future.

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

De-Appropriations from Maine Clean Election Fund

Fiscal Year	Amount	Action by Legislature	Chapter Law	Deadline in Law
2003	\$4,000,000	Transfer to Maine Rainy Day Fund	P.L. 2001, Chapter 559, § E-3 (2002)	6/30/2003
2003	\$2,500,000	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2001, Chapter 714, § N-1 (2002)	6/30/2003
2004	\$225,000	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2003, Chapter 20, § D-26 (2003)	6/30/2004
2008	\$135,199	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2007, Chapter 539, § L-3 (2008)	6/30/2008
2009	\$1,300,000	Reduction in annual revenue	P.L. 2007, Chapter 240, § F-2 (2007)	1/1/2009
2009	\$135,717	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2007, Chapter 539, § L-3 (2008)	6/30/2009
2010	\$363,930	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2009, Chapter 213, § NNNN-4 (2009)	6/30/2010
2011	\$121,310	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2009, Chapter 213, § NNNN-4 (2009)	6/30/2011
2012	\$1,300,000	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2011, Chapter 655, § AA-1 (2012)	6/30/2012
2013	\$950,000	Transfer to General Fund	P.L. 2011, Chapter 655, § AA-1 (2012)	6/30/2013
2015	\$1,700,000	Reduction in annual revenue	P.L. 2013, Chapter 368, § MM-4 (2013)	1/1/2015
Total	\$12,731,156			

Returns to Maine Clean Election Fund

2006	\$2,400,000	Transfer from General Fund	P.L. 2005, Chapter 3, § P-1 (2005)	1/1/2006
2007	\$1,200,000	Transfer from General Fund	P.L. 2005, Chapter 519, § KK-1 (2006)	9/30/2006
2010	\$2,000,000	Transfer from General Fund	P.L. 2009, Chapter 213, § F-1 (2009)	6/1/2010
2014	\$500,000	Transfer from General Fund	P.L. 2013, Chapter 368, § MM-3	6/1/2014
Total	\$6,100,000			

Net Transfer from Maine Clean Election Fund:
\$6,631,156