



TO: The Honorable Louis Luchini
The Honorable Chris Caiazzo, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: February 24, 2021

RE: LD 413, An Act to Apply the Same Auditing Standards to All Candidates and Political Action Committees

Good morning Senator Luchini and Representative Caiazzo.

My name is Robert Howe. I'm a resident of Brunswick. I am here today as the registered lobbyist for Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. I am testifying in support of LD 413.

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.

We believe the requirement to randomly audit both candidate campaigns and political action committees will raise the level of compliance and strengthen public confidence in our campaign finance laws. We thank Rep. Riseman for bringing this bill forward.

It is appropriate to audit both privately funded candidates and Clean Election candidates alike. LD 413 is fair in its requirement to audit equal percentages of each type of campaign.

Clean Election and privately funded candidates are subject to important laws and rules that provide transparency and eliminate opportunities for corruption and its appearance. Political action committees are vehicles for massive amounts of money in politics. In all cases, the public has the right to know who has donated to campaigns, who is paid by campaigns, and how funds are spent.

Because disclosure requirements are the foundation that allow for enforcement, the public has a reasonable expectation that reporting will be accurate, thorough, and timely. Setting a standard for audits will clearly convey to all campaigns and PACs the importance of careful bookkeeping, proper document retention, and other best practices of campaign reporting.

Audits will help us see how well we're doing when it comes to routine compliance with campaign finance laws. They may verify that campaigns are compliant with all aspects of the law. They may expose sloppy bookkeeping and poor record-keeping or reveal actual violations of the law and rules. The results of the audits may suggest improvements to our disclosure laws and the rules that govern reporting.

In short, random audits will strengthen accountability and increase compliance. We encourage a vote of Ought to Pass on LD 413.

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