

*Testimony of Lloyd C. Irland
To the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
In opposition to L.D. 194, "An Act To Prohibit Contributions, Expenditures and
Participation by Foreign Government-owned Entities To Influence Referenda"
Monday, 15 March 2021*

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and members of the Committee, my name is Lloyd C. Irland; I am a semi-retired consultant and former Maine State Economist. I testify today in opposition to this bill. I am a veteran myself but have never testified before this committee.

As you may already know, I support the Clean Energy Corridor project. It is the only chance we have to make a very large and prompt down payment on important longterm CO2 reduction goals; it benefits the region and Maine in many ways. It has obtained, in open and extensive proceedings, regulatory approvals at multiple levels of government. Claims that it is being "rushed through" are groundless. Repeated claims that it will "irreparably harm the Maine Woods" are in my opinion, entirely without merit. I base this view on more 40 years of intensive work on Maine forests as well as personal acquaintance with the area where the new corridor is planned.

This bill seems to have been artfully crafted to let people suspend a natural disbelief in the proposition that it is aimed at a single organization. It is not aimed at solving a recognized problem that is widespread, increasing, and troubling to our democracy. There is no showing that companies with some share of government equity ownership – which are numerous in the world today – are overwhelming Maine's democracy by funding referenda.

Does this one situation create an "emergency" demanding immediate legislative action?

LD 194 is instead a transparent legal maneuver to take one more stab at cancelling a chain of legally obtained permits by legislative action motivated by purely political motives.

Had there been no gas company funded opposition campaign of signs, ads, meetings, petitions with signatures obtained in part by paid gatherers, letters

to editors, and mailings across the state, there would be no need for a campaign by NECEC proponents to respond.

Legal and constitutional flaws in LD 194 will be outlined by others more competent than I.

If it reports this bill “ought to Pass”, this Committee will in effect be saying:

“We’re fine with out of state money coming here to support referenda, on any number of subjects, including overturning regulatory decisions by authorized agencies created by this legislature;

“We are comfortable with deluges of out of state money pouring in here to influence our elections for Governor and for Congress”.

BUT

“We are not comfortable with allowing a proponent of a one billion dollar project in Maine to answer contentious claims by its opponents.”

It is a good thing that Maine legislators are concerned about the role of money in politics. I submit that there are far bigger issues in that space that need their attention than the one LD194 seeks to address.

I trust that on examination of the facts of this situation and the legal arguments to be laid before you, you will conclude that LD 194 “Ought Not to Pass”.

Thank you for your time.

Lloyd C. Irland
Wayne, Maine

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