



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

DATE: April 14, 2021

RE: LD 1284, An Act to Amend the Maine Clean Election Act and Related Laws

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Good morning Senator Luchini and Representative Caiazzo, and honorable members of the Committee.

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 and MCCE Action. I am testifying in opposition to LD 1284.

For over 25 years MCCE has advocated for Maine's Clean Election Act public funding system. We were there at the start to advocate for its enactment in 1996, during the early years when participation was ramping up, when budget challenges and court decisions threatened to weaken the program, and up to today where it is well-established and continues to enjoy broad support among the candidates and the general public.

Anti-tax activist Grover Norquist once famously said, "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub."

That sentiment came to mind as we began reading this bill. LD 1284 would completely undermine the Maine Clean Election Act, stripping it of its viability and depriving Maine people of the law they made and for which they have fought for a quarter century. The result would be a program so diminished, with participation so diluted, that it could be flushed down the drain, if not drowned in the bathtub.

LD 1284 does not serve the interests of candidates or the public. It lightens disclosure requirements, decreasing the transparency that voters need in order to understand who is behind campaign communications. It rolls back specific elements of the Maine Clean Election Act that citizens initiated and voters approved in 2015, elements that buttressed the system in the wake of a damaging US Supreme Court decision and ensured its viability into the future.

The newly configured law works well, and there is no cause to revisit these provisions. The Maine Clean Election Act, created and named by Maine people, is a point of pride for Mainers, and it is both well-used and popular with candidates and voters alike.

Over the years when actual problems with Clean Elections have arisen, MCCE has been ready and willing to work toward pragmatic, constitutional, and fair solutions. We are happy to work with any legislator from any place, any party, and any point-of-view who is working in good faith to improve the law. But we will not roll up our sleeves to parse an overt effort to gut the law.

We don't expect everyone to love this law as much as we do. We don't expect every candidate to use it; it's a purely voluntary system.

We do expect our elected representatives to respect the will of Maine people who continue to support and work hard for this and other campaign finance laws in order to keep our democracy strong.

We respectfully ask you all to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1284.

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

