



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Nichi Farnham
The Honorable Representative Michael Beaulieu, Co-chairs
The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

RE: LD 120 An Act to End Taxpayer-funded Campaigns for Gubernatorial Candidates

The League of Women Voters urges you today to support continued public funding for candidates for governor in 2012 and beyond. We believe that failure to retain the public financing system for Maine's gubernatorial candidates would be a breach of public trust and an enormous loss to the public good.

The Maine Clean Elections Act (MCEA) was a landmark reform that appeared on the ballot in 1996, a Presidential election year when Maine ranked #1 nationwide in voter turnout. This measure passed with 56% of the vote. More Maine voters (320,755) said "yes" to this ballot question than have voted for any winning gubernatorial candidate in the last 20 years. Public funding for gubernatorial candidates was part of that original ballot question.

The League of Women Voters believes in public funding for elections at both the national and state level. The League's position on Campaign Finance reflects our continuing concern for open and honest elections and for maximum citizen participation in the political process. The League's position is that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and allow maximum participation in the political process.

The MCEA works to accomplish these important goals. Maine's public financing system is an exemplar of good government practice to be emulated in other states around the country and at the federal level.

The annual cost of public financing in Maine is truly modest in light of the fundamental public benefit it provides. The program overall costs Maine people less than \$2 per person per year from the general fund. The gubernatorial portion of the program represents about 1/3 of the program total, or about 67 cents per person per year. For this nominal cost, we give candidates for our highest statewide office the option to run without raising money from wealthy donors, and without the undue influence that wealthy donors can exert on public policy.

We urge you to recommend in support of continued public funding of gubernatorial candidates under the Maine Clean Elections Act.

Ann Luther
League of Women Voters of Maine
February 16, 2011

The League of Women Voters has been a leader in seeking campaign finance reform at the state and federal levels for more than three decades. The League was a founding member of the coalition now called Maine Citizens for Clean Elections that worked to pass the landmark Maine Clean Elections Act just over ten years ago.

Founded in 1920, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major political policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.