



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Scott Cyrway
The Honorable Representative Louis Luchini, Co-chairs
The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

DATE: April 24, 2015

RE: LD 1290 An Act To Repeal the Maine Clean Election Act and Direct the
Savings To Be Used for the State's Contribution toward the Costs of Education
Funding

Good afternoon, my name is Helen Hanlon, and I'm here today as a volunteer member of the League of Women Voters of Maine Advocacy Committee. The League of Women Voters urges you to vigorously OPPOSE repeal of the Maine Clean Election Act.

The League of Women Voters believes that methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know; combat corruption and undue influence; enable candidates to compete equitably for public office; and allow maximum citizen access to the political process. The League believes that public financing of elections is the best approach for accomplishing these goals.

The League of Women Voters has been a champion of campaign finance reform at the state and federal levels for more than three decades. The League is proud to have been a founding member of the broad-based, nonpartisan coalition that drafted the Maine Clean Election Act and collected 65,000 signatures in 1995 to put the citizens' initiative before the voters in 1996.

In the last few years, disastrous court decisions and damaging legislative action and inaction have weakened the Maine Clean Election Act, but more than ever before, Maine people want strong measures to keep government responsive to the people, not just to wealthy donors. Last year, League members were among the hundreds of volunteers once again taking matters into their own hands to protect the Maine Clean Election Act. We circulated petitions again last year, collecting 81,000 signatures to put a ballot measure before the people this fall to restore, not repeal, the Maine Clean Election Act.

We believe that failure to retain Maine's public financing system would be a breach of public trust and an enormous loss to the public good.

Maine's public financing system is a shining example of best government practice to be emulated in other states around the country and at the federal level. The annualized cost of public financing in Maine is truly modest – about \$3 per person per year – especially in light of the fundamental public benefit it provides.

The League urges you to OPPOSE LD 1290.

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.