

# Clean Elections

Wendy Quinones



Campaign finance regulations	U.S.	Maine
Maximum individual contribution to any one candidate	\$2,300	\$5
Maximum individual contribution to all candidates, parties, and PACs	\$108,200 per two-year election cycle	Unlimited (proposal for \$1000 per PAC, total of \$10,000 per 2-year election cycle)
Public funding	Matches qualifying contributions raised by candidate	Equal amounts distributed to each candidate, with additional funds if candidate's opponent has not agreed to Clean Elections restrictions
Maximum expenditure permitted (under federal matching funds limitation if the election were in 2007)	\$81.8 million	Determined by spending in past elections
Without public financing	Unlimited—as much as the candidate can raise	Unlimited—as much as the candidate can raise

## Public vs. Private Financing

If candidates want to run a “clean election,” they have to agree to spending limits and reject special interest cash. In return, they receive public funding for their campaigns. In both state and federal elections, participation in public funding is voluntary. Few candidates (and no presidential candidates) choose to do so at the federal level. If candidates do not accept the terms of public financing, they are free to raise as much as they can from private donors.

Democratic, Republican, and independent voters all support Fair Elections. Nearly 75 percent of

respondents—including 80 percent of Democrats and 65 percent of Republicans—said in a mid-2006 poll that they supported a voluntary public funding system.

## What Happened in Maine?

In Maine’s 2006 elections, 81% of candidates ran under the Clean Elections (CE) law. The vast majority of CE candidates won their elections (83% of the Senate, 84% of the House). Maine’s legislature is now composed of 84% legislators who ran under the CE law. Watch “Getting a Grip on Money and Politics,” at <[www.quantumshift.tv/v/1191271814](http://www.quantumshift.tv/v/1191271814)>. This video examines campaign finance reform through the eyes of Deborah Simpson, a former waitress and single mother who ran for office under Maine’s Clean Election law, and won!

## For Discussion

1. What are some of the effects of allowing individuals to make large campaign contributions?
2. How has the Maine Clean Elections law changed elections in that state?
3. Under which system would you rather be a candidate? Why?
4. Arizona and Connecticut have also passed statewide public campaign funding laws. What effect have those laws had on who is in office?

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