

# Public Financing Success in Maine and Arizona: Comprehensive Reform Means Voter-Owned Elections.

A new kind of politics is beginning to take root in Maine and Arizona where candidates campaigned this year under the nation's first Clean Elections systems. Clean Election programs provide a level playing field by offering qualified candidates a limited and equal amount of public funds. It's a bold step forward in campaign finance reform, seeking to restore democracy and the principle of one person, one vote.



## In Maine:

### **Broad participation:**

116 candidates out of 352 general election candidates opted into the Clean Election program. Thirty-two percent were incumbents. Almost half the races had at least one candidate running on full public financing.

**More competition:** Maine witnessed a 40 percent increase in the number of contested primaries and an overall increase in the number of women running for office this year. Many candidates say the program was key to their decision to run. (See profiles on back)

**A liberated legislature:** One-third of Maine's legislators will take office in January without any votes scrutinized because of who gave them big campaign contributors. In the Senate, 17 out of 35 members (49%) won their seats with full public financing. In the House, 45 out of 151 winners (30%) participated in the program.

**Results:** Over half of the Clean Election candidates (54%) came out winners in the November election. In races that pitted Clean Election candidates against privately-funded opponents, Clean Election candidates won 53% of the time. As provided under the law, many candidates received supplemental matching funds, above and beyond their original state allotment, to keep pace with their opponents' spending.

**100% approval rating:** Candidates approve of the new system. In a survey conducted by the Maine Citizen Leadership Fund, 55% of candidates said they are "very satisfied" with the program and 45% said they are "reasonably satisfied" with the program so far.

## In Arizona:



### **More competition:**

Arizona saw a big increase in the number of candidates for office, as the state ushered in its new public financing program. 214 people ran for office this year, compared to 135 people two years ago. 60 candidates ran under the Clean Election program.

### **Clean Elections proved decisive in some cases:**

Democrat Jay Blanchard pulled off an upset victory in a State Senate race over opponent Jeff Groscost, former Speaker of the House. Blanchard - an education professor and newcomer to legislative politics -- opted into the public finance program and ran a low-budget, grassroots campaign. He spent only one-fourth of the \$100,000 spent by Groscost. The public financing gave Blanchard enough money to establish credibility and visibility just as voters became critical of Groscost for his role in a state budget fiasco.

**“What has long been lacking in the debate over full public financing is the empirical evidence of its effect on an election, until now.”**

*The New York Times 11/19/00*

**Freedom from conflicts of interest:** Regulatory commissioners serving on Arizona's three-person Corporation Commission, a statewide office with broad powers, will include two members elected without financial ties to the companies they regulate. Four of five Commission candidates ran with public funding, and two won.

**Public Financing Wins:** 16 candidates were elected without ties to special interests or Big Money. Twelve will serve in the Arizona House of Representatives. Two will serve in the Senate.

## MAINE CANDIDATE PROFILES



**Rick Bennett (R)** is the Assistant Senate Minority Leader and a candidate for reelection.

"We have an obligation to put into practice the system that was approved by voters in 1996. Maine is in the lead in this area. It will only work if it is used, and it is important for incumbents to embrace it. Also, the Clean Election Act is making it easier to recruit candidates to run for office."



**Glenn Cummings (D)** is a first-time candidate. Cummings, a former high school teacher who is running for a House seat.

"It encourages a face-to-face connection -- you just have to get out and meet people.... I spent a lot of 'kitchen table' time explaining the [Clean Election] system to people. Once they knew what it was, they really liked it. They like that it means no soft money and no PAC money will be used." "I want to work for the people of Maine and I don't want to be beholden to anyone else."



**Beth Edmonds (D)** is making a second try for a Maine Senate seat. In addition to working as a children's librarian in Freeport, Edmonds served four years on the national board of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and four years as state chair. She faces another Clean Election candidate in the general election.

"It's the right thing to do. I want to move this country away from money as the determiner of who gets to run. Our system should allow people with grassroots support to get what they need to run. The Clean Election Act puts working people, poor people and all people on equal footing."



**Norman Ferguson (R)** is no stranger to traditional politics – he's running for a fourth term in the state Senate, and his father was also a state senator. Ferguson will face a Democratic opponent in the general election who is also using the Clean Election option.

"My opponent is also Clean Elections, which means he'll be better funded than my opponent was last time, so we'll be even in that regard..."

"I didn't have too much difficulty [with the qualifying process]... I found that people were pretty receptive."



**Susan Longley (D)** is running for her fourth term as a state senator. Longley chairs the Judiciary Committee and teaches conservation law. Longley comes from a politically active and diverse family – her father, James Longley, served as Maine's governor, and her brother is Republican former Congressman, James Longley, Jr. Her opponent is also running under the Clean Election option.

"I have more freedom to say 'No.' When a constituent called for help on an issue and offered a contribution, I told him to keep his money for his wife who was ill at the time. Formerly, candidates couldn't afford to pass up contributions, however large or small."



**Jolene Lovejoy (R)** is a first-time candidate but a longtime community activist, current selectman and president of her local Rotary Club. She is running for a House seat using Clean Election funds and is facing a publicly-funded Democratic opponent.

"Clean Elections is a wonderful opportunity. I felt it was just the right thing to do... It removes any stigma from the candidate -- any feeling of, or actually being, indebted."

"My bottom line is this. I'm running to represent the people who live here, and keep an eye on the state of Maine. I'm not there for business, or unions, just the people."



**House Majority Leader Michael Saxl (D)** is running for his fourth term. An attorney, Saxl works full time managing the House Democratic Caucus, and he faces a Clean Election opponent.

"I think the Maine Clean Election Act is a wonderful experiment in democracy. It will allow me to spend more time on the campaign trail visiting with constituents and less time raising dollars."

"It is an expression by the electorate of strong support for grassroots democracy. I hope it proves to be a successful venture for me."



**Mary Small (R)** is seeking her fourth term in the Maine Senate. She previously served eight terms in the House. Small serves on the Education Committee and has done consulting for a firm that helps students get loans for college. She faces two opponents in the general election, one who is using Clean Election funding and one who is not. "I was hesitant to participate in the Clean Election system at first, but my constituents wanted it and I really like the fact that it took away the need to fundraise. Now, I'm thrilled that the fundraising is all behind me, and that I don't have to ask for money."