

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Amend the Maine Clean Election Act

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 21-A MRSA §1015, sub-§1, as amended by PL 1999, c. 729, §2, is further amended to read:

1. Individuals. An individual may not make contributions to a candidate in support of the candidacy of one person aggregating more than ~~\$500~~\$1,000 in any election for a gubernatorial candidate or more than ~~\$250~~\$750 in any election for a candidate for the state Senate or more than \$500 in any other candidate election for a candidate for the state House of Representatives. This limitation does not apply to contributions in support of a candidate by that candidate or that candidate's spouse.

Sec. 2. 21-A MRSA §1122, sub-§9, as amended by PL 2005, c. 301, §28, is further amended to read:

9. Seed money contribution. "Seed money contribution" means a contribution of no more than ~~\$100 per individual~~ made to a candidate from a voter within the electoral division for which the candidate is seeking election, including a contribution from the candidate or the candidate's family. To be eligible for certification, a candidate may collect and spend only seed money contributions subsequent to becoming a candidate as defined by section 1, subsection 5 and throughout the qualifying period. A participating candidate who has accepted contributions or made expenditures that do not comply with the seed money restrictions under this chapter may petition the commission to remain eligible for certification as a Maine Clean Election Act candidate in accordance with rules of the commission, if the failure to comply was unintentional and does not constitute a significant infraction of these restrictions. Prior to certification, a candidate may obligate an amount greater than the seed money collected if the value of the goods and services received from a vendor does not exceed the amount paid to the vendor. A candidate may not collect or spend seed money contributions after certification as a Maine Clean Election Act candidate. A seed money contribution must be reported according to procedures developed by the commission.

Sec. 3. 21-A MRSA §1125, sub-§2, as enacted by IB 1995, c. 1, §17, is amended to read:

2. Restrictions on contributions for participating candidates. Subsequent to becoming a candidate as defined by section 1, subsection 5 and prior to certification, a participating candidate may not accept contributions, except for seed money contributions. A participating candidate must ~~limit the candidate's~~raise seed money contributions ~~to~~in the following amounts:

- A. Fifty thousand dollars for a gubernatorial candidate;
- B. One thousand five hundred dollars for a candidate for the State Senate; or
- C. Five hundred dollars for a candidate for the State House of Representatives.

The commission may, by rule, revise these amounts and establish a maximum amount of seed money contributions to ensure the effective implementation of this chapter.

Sec. 4. 21-A MRSA §1125, sub-§9, as repealed and replaced by PL 2003, c. 688, Pt. A, §22, is amended to read:

9. Matching funds. When any campaign, finance or election report for a general election shows that the sum of a candidate's expenditures or obligations, or funds raised or borrowed, whichever is greater, alone or in conjunction with independent expenditures reported under section 1019-B, exceeds the distribution amount under subsection 8 for a general election plus any seed money raised, the commission shall issue immediately to any opposing Maine Clean Election Act candidate an additional amount equivalent to the reported excess. Matching funds are limited to 2 times the amount originally distributed under subsection 8, paragraph ~~A, C~~, E or F, whichever is applicable.

SUMMARY

This bill increases the contribution limits in current law for legislative and gubernatorial candidates. Under this bill, individuals may make contributions aggregating up to \$1,000 for a gubernatorial candidate, \$750 to a candidate for the state Senate and \$500 to a candidate for the state House of Representatives. This bill specifies that seed money contributions for a candidate seeking certification as a Maine Clean Election Act candidate must come from voters within the candidate's voting district and that a minimum amount must be collected in order to become certified as a Maine Clean Election Act candidate. The bill also changes current law to exclude the distribution of matching funds in primary elections. Finally, this bill includes seed money raised by a Maine Clean Election Act candidate in the formula used to determine whether a candidate may receive matching funds.