

**Comments of Kaitlin LaCasse on Behalf of Protect Maine Elections
before the Maine Ethics Commission**

February 28, 2024

Good Morning to the members of the Maine Ethics Commission. My name is Kaitlin LaCasse and I am the campaign manager for Protect Maine Elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments concerning the Commission's proposed amendments to its rules to implement 21-A M.R.S. § 1064, which prohibits foreign governments from making contributions and expenditures to influence elections in Maine.

Protect Maine Elections is the ballot question committee formed by Maine voters in response to the Federal Elections Commission ruling that it has no jurisdiction over state referendum campaigns. This ruling created a dangerous loophole that allows corporations owned and controlled by foreign governments to spend in referendum campaigns unless explicitly prohibited by state law. This initiative closes that loophole and puts elections back in the hands of Maine people — and out of reach from foreign government-owned entities.

On behalf of Protect Maine Elections and the 86% of Maine voters who supported this law on election day, thank you to the Ethics Commission staff for their careful drafting of these amendments, and to the Commission members for the thoughtful conversation during the last meeting.

Protect Maine Elections supports the amendments as drafted.

And, this law is more important than ever. According to Maine Citizens for Clean Elections, entities that are owned, controlled, and/or influenced by foreign governments spent more than \$100 million on Maine ballot initiatives between 2020 - 2023. Last election cycle alone, such entities were responsible for 83% of spending.

Alarmed with this trend of out of control spending by foreign entities, a record breaking 86% of Maine voters voted in support of this initiative. This is the largest margin of victory on a Maine statewide ballot initiative in the state's history, ever.

The only opponents to this initiative are the very foreign entities that are seeking to preserve their power and multinational media corporations that are the biggest benefactors in the political spending arms race each cycle. Maine voters delivered the clearest of messages on election day, telling the monied interests and the political class that we are taking our government back. And, we are outraged that these entities are currently challenging the law in court in an effort to overturn the will of the Maine people, who spoke with a near singular voice on Nov. 7th in support of protecting our elections from foreign government interference.

Thank you again to the Ethics Commission for continuing to move forward with the rulemaking process.