



Maine Town & City Clerks' Association

Local Government Center • 60 Community Drive
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Date: May 10, 2023

To: Senator Craig Hickman, Senate Chair
Representative Laura Supica, House Chair
And members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

From: Patti Dubois, Chairperson, Legislative Policy Committee
Maine Town and City Clerks' Association

Re: LD 1869 – An Act to Prohibit the Private Funding of Elections

Position: Neither For Nor Against

The Maine Town & City Clerks' Association is neither for nor against LD 1869 and we thank you for the opportunity to outline our points for your committee.

Our members understand and appreciate the desire to avoid any influence of election officials, or even the perception of influence through receipt of private funding for election administration.

In 2020, several Maine municipalities were awarded grant funds from the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) to be used for any election-related purchases for items intended to facilitate administration of a large election during an unprecedented pandemic. The grant awards were at least \$5,000 and over \$336,000 for Maine's largest city.

The grant funds were used for various purposes on items such as the purchase of tables, voting booths, PPE, laptops, printers, photocopiers, laminating equipment, additional postage costs, additional pay and hiring of election workers, storage trailers, stanchions, signage, mobile message boards, and advertising. These purchases made a significant difference in managing a dramatic increase in absentee voting by allowing for additional staffing and equipment, communicating relevant and timely information to voters, along with covering the huge spike in postage costs. In addition, social distancing and sanitation efforts were handled with adequate equipment, staffing and supplies due, in large part, to the funding received by these grants.

To be clear, the award of these funds in no way influenced election officials in the conduct of the fair administration of this election. To purport otherwise would be an attempt to discredit hardworking election officials across the state. Grant funds must be accepted and appropriated by the municipal officials and accounted for through the municipality's financials. Simply put, the additional funding made the nearly insurmountable task of administering an election during the height of a pandemic possible. Election officials should be lauded for their efforts, not discredited for accepting financial resources.

Representing Over 400



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Members wondered how this bill may impact the use of private venues for polling location for no charge, or the donation of food to election staff, or the free use of a college bus to transport voters, or the use of volunteers as election workers since all of these would be equivalent to over \$100 in value.

With that said, the perception of influence is a serious issue and should be avoided. Our members suggested the consideration of a reporting mechanism for municipalities to disclose private funding and donations used in the administration of elections.

The Maine Town & City Clerks' Association appreciates the opportunity to share its testimony with the Committee. Should any questions arise, please feel free to contact me at 207)680-4210 or by email: pdubois@waterville-me.gov .