



For Immediate Release

May 14, 2013

Contact:

Andrew Bossie
MCCE Executive Director
207-831-6223

Report Reveals Uneven Campaign Money Behind GMO Labeling Fight in Maine

Augusta - Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) released a report today showing that industry opponents of GMO labeling have invested over 10 times more in political contributions than those pushing for labeling of consumer products that contain genetically modified ingredients. The findings come as the 126th Maine legislature considers LD 718, a bill that would make Maine one of the first states in the nation to require such labeling.

The report analyzed political contributions made by supporters and opponents of GMO labeling using publicly available data from the state ethics commission. It found that principle supporters of LD 718, Maine Conservation Voters and Business Members of the Maine Organic Farmers Association, have contributed \$27,276 in Maine legislative and gubernatorial races during the past 12 years. During the same time period, eight opponents of GMO labeling, including Monsanto and the Grocery Manufacturers Association, have doled out \$280,850 in political contributions.

Advocates of LD 718, which carries a supermajority of 123 co-sponsors, have pointed to polling that shows broad public support for disclosure of consumer products containing GMO ingredients. Opponents, on the other hand, say scientific research shows GMO ingredients are as safe and nutritious as foods that have not been bioengineered and that this legislation would stigmatize farmers who grow genetically modified foods.

“While there seems to be a growing appetite for GMO labeling in Maine, industries that find this legislation less palatable have invested heavily in Maine campaigns,” said Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of MCCE. “Too often this type of political money distorts the terms of public policy debate.”

The release comes as the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee takes up LD 1309, “An Act to Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act.” The bill would replace the matching funds portion of Maine’s public financing law struck down by the courts in 2011 by allowing candidates in high spending races to obtain limited additional funding. To do so qualified candidates would need to collect additional \$5 checks from voters in their district to demonstrate support within their own communities. Bossie added, “We need to strengthen our campaign finance laws, including fully restoring the Clean Election Act, so we can reduce this type of special interest money in our elections and government.” The bill, sponsored by Sen. Ed Youngblood, was tabled during work session yesterday; it’s expected to be taken up again later this week.

The full report can be found at www.maine cleanelections.org/money-7

The report is the 7th in a series on the role and effect of money on Maine politics.

###