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Clear Distortions

By Luke Wachob

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Sam Jenkins' [Aug. 10 BDN letter to the editor "Clean Distortions,"](#) stated that under Maine's Clean Elections program, the number of women legislators has increased 150 percent. If true, this claim would be a striking piece of evidence that privately funded campaigns have seriously sexist effects and that taxpayer-funded campaigns can open new opportunities for women.

However, this claim is not true. It's outrageously false.

In the last legislature before Clean Elections, [Maine had 51 female legislators.](#) Today, there are 54. That's an increase of 5.9 percent, not 150 percent.

Advocates of taxpayer-funded campaigns have never let facts or math get in the way of their attempts to provide taxpayer dollars to politicians, but reasonable people should pay attention to the evidence.

The most women legislators Maine has ever had was 61 in 1991, under a system of privately financed campaigns. The other state to have taxpayer-funded campaigns since 2000, Arizona, has also seen its number of women legislators flatline under the system. Arizona had 32 women legislators in 1999, and it has 32 women legislators in 2013, according to information provided by the Center for Competitive Politics.

This is just one example of how proponents of taxpayer-funded campaigns distort or fabricate evidence to support their cause. The truth is that taxpayer-funded campaigns have not shown any ability at all to increase opportunities for women. The opportunity they open is for politicians to get more money for their campaigns, whether we like it or not.

Luke Wachob

Center for Competitive Politics policy analyst