



Minutes of the February 10, 2026 Meeting of the
Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices
45 Memorial Circle, Augusta, Maine

Present: William Schneider, Esq., Chair; Dennis Marble; David Hastings, Esq.; and Sarah LeClaire, Esq. (all by Zoom)

Staff: Jonathan Wayne, Executive Director; and Jonathan R. Bolton, Assistant Attorney General (both by Zoom).

Commissioner Schneider convened the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

1. Proposed Legislation – Party Committee Disclosure of Ballot Question Activity

A recent complaint highlighted ambiguity in Maine campaign finance law concerning how the committees of political parties should report contributions received and expenditures made to support or oppose ballot questions. At its January 28, 2026 meeting, the Commission authorized Mr. Wayne to prepare legislation to resolve the ambiguity for consideration by the Commission and possible submission to the Legislature in 2026.

Mr. Wayne said Commission staff believes that, going forward, the simplest and most accessible way for a party committee to disclose its financial activity to influence a ballot question would be in the committee's regular campaign finance reports filed under 21-A M.R.S. § 1017-A. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Wayne circulated a draft amendment to LD 2000 that would modify the content of party committee reports and the exceptions to the ballot question committee definition in 21-A M.R.S. § 1052(2-A).

Mr. Hastings asked whether: the bulk upload feature in the Commission's new eFiling system would allow a filer to specify the ballot question supported or opposed by each expenditure; the campaign finance reports would display that information; and if totals would be calculated for public viewing. Mr. Wayne confirmed the answer was yes to all three questions and described how the new system would work. With reference to the Commission's old eFiling system, Mr. Wayne said Commission staff continues to believe a filer was able to use the bulk upload feature to specify the question supported or opposed by an expenditure.

Mr. Schneider suggested a change in the language concerning how party committees specify the ballot question supported or opposed. Mr. Bolton suggested a possible cross-reference in the ballot question committee definition to a current exception in the committee registration statute, 21-A M.R.S. § 1052-A(1-A).

Kate Knox, counsel to the Maine State Democratic Party, said she appreciated the proposed changes and wanted to continue conversations with staff regarding the bulk upload feature in the Commission's previous eFiling system. She questioned the need to continue with the investigation authorized at the January 28 Commission meeting. Mr. Schneider said the status of the investigation will be considered at the next Commission meeting.

Mr. Schneider moved to authorize staff to submit the legislation with the recommended changes. Ms. LeClaire seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Other Business

Adjournment

Mr. Hastings made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Marble seconded. The motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Wayne, Executive Director