



Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Companies represented on the MFPC Board

A & A Brochu Logging
American Forest Mgmt.
Baskahegan Co.
BBC Land, LLC
Columbia Forest Prod.
Cross Insurance
Family Forestry
Farm Credit East
Fontaine Inc.
H.C. Haynes
Huber Resources
INRS
J.D. Irving
Katahdin Forest Mgmt.
Key Bank
Kennebec Lumber
LandVest Inc.
Louisiana Pacific
Maibec Logging
ND Paper
Nicols Brothers
Pingree Associates
Prentiss & Carlisle
ReEnergy
Richard Wing & Son
Robbins Lumber
Sappi North America
Southern Maine Forestry
Stead Timberlands
St. Croix Tissue
St. Croix Chipping
TD Bank
Timber Resource Group
Timberstate G.
Wadsworth Woodlands
Wagner Forest Mgt.
Weyerhaeuser
Woodland Pulp

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1610 (IB 1)

“An Act to Prohibit Campaign Spending by Foreign Governments and Promote an Anticorruption Amendment to the United States Constitution”

May 3, 2023

Patrick Strauch, Executive Director

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, I am Patrick Strauch, executive director of the Maine Forest Products Council. Since 1961, MFPC has represented the broad spectrum of our state's diverse forest products community, including logging contractors, sawmills, pulp and paper mills, biomass energy facilities, pellet manufacturers, furniture manufacturers and the owners of more than eight million acres of commercial forestland in Maine. I am submitting testimony today in opposition to LD 1610, “An Act to Prohibit Campaign Spending by Foreign Governments and Promote an Anticorruption Amendment to the United States Constitution.”

The Council opposes LD 1610 because a direct line can be drawn between the spruce budworm outbreak of 1970 - '85 and efforts to change Maine's timber harvesting laws at the ballot box. The scramble to salvage wood before it was killed or damaged set off alarms with environmental groups. The Legislature passed the Forest Practices Act in 1989 to regulate harvesting, but the limits didn't allay all the concerns and three referendums on clearcutting were fiercely debated in 1996, 1997 and 2000. All were defeated, thanks to an industrywide effort that included companies headquartered outside the U.S., but with business operations here.

Maine's forest industry is an amalgam of companies from Maine and elsewhere around the globe. The definition of a foreign-based government having 5% or more of the total equity is a rule that would be very difficult to follow for businesses (including U.S.-based businesses) that are publicly traded and may have foreign government pension funds as investors at any time. We support and appreciate business investments that have been made and are also actively marketing Maine to innovative companies in other parts of the world seeking new uses for wood. These organizations have an important responsibility to protect their investments from referendums like those in the past that threatened wood fiber supply for land managers and wood manufacturers alike.

The Bill of Rights protects freedom of speech for all people regardless of status or nationality. The Supreme Court also has ruled¹ that the government cannot prevent corporations and unions from spending money to express their views in political elections.

Democracy depends on free speech to allow the open exchange of ideas by those who are affected by policy decisions. Restricting an open public policy debate could deprive decision

¹ <https://www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/citizens-united-v-fec/>

makers -- legislators or referendum voters -- of information and perspectives that are relevant to the decision. That is unfair to those excluded and contrary to constitutional principles of free speech and democracy.

Businesses with assets in Maine deserve the right to make their views known about issues and decisions that will affect them. This referendum also could be a deterrent to businesses that are considering investing in facilities here. For these reasons, the Maine Forest Products Council opposes LD 1610.