

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin

Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross.

Statement on Campaign Finance Reform

July 30, 1997

In my State of the Union Address, I called on Congress to enact bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation. I said that delay could be the death of reform and urged Congress to move forward quickly. I strongly support the decision by Senators McCain and Feingold to bring campaign finance reform legislation to the floor of Congress in September for a vote.

The problems with the role of money in Presidential and congressional elections are plain. Since the campaign finance laws were last overhauled two and a half decades ago, the system has been overwhelmed by a flood of campaign cash. Both political parties are now engaged in an ever-escalating arms race for campaign funds. The consequences for our political system are clear: There is too much money in politics, and it takes too much time to raise.

To make sure that ordinary citizens have the loudest voice in our democracy, we must act to change the campaign finance laws. This year, I have asked the FEC to ban so-called soft money to parties; I have asked the Federal

Communications Commission to require broadcasters to provide free TV time to candidates; and the Justice Department has indicated it will defend spending limits in the courts. But these steps, however important, are no substitute for legislation. America needs—and the American people demand—strong, comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation. As the new century approaches, we have an opportunity and an obligation to restore the trust of the American people in their politics—and this is our chance to do it.

For years, the special interests and their allies have blocked reform. This year, those who seek to continue special interest influence as usual will filibuster again. But this year, we have an opportunity to come together across party lines to act and pass reform that cleans up the campaign finance system. September will be the time for Members of the Senate to stand up and be counted for reform. I will do what I can to see to it that 1997 is finally the year that it is achieved.

Remarks to the 1997 National Boy Scout Jamboree in Bowling Green, Virginia

July 30, 1997

Thank you very much. Are those Arkansas flags I see back there? Thank you for waving them.

Let me say to all of you, I want to begin by thanking John Kates for that introduction. Congratulations for passing the board of review for the Eagle Scout rank. I didn't notice whether John had a public speaking merit badge on his sash, but I'd say he earned one tonight standing up in front of all of you to introduce me. I think he did a great job. Let's give him a hand. [Applause]

I want to say to Jere Radcliff, Roy Roberts, Jack Creighton, to all the officials of the Boy Scouts here, thank you for what you do with our young people. I'm happy to be joined tonight by the Secretary of the Navy, John Dalton; the Secretary of the Air Force, Sheila Widnall; the Under Secretary of the Army, Joe Reeder; and the Chief of Naval Operations, the top ranking naval officer in the United States and a proud Eagle Scout, Admiral Jay Johnson. They're right over here, and we're all glad to be with you tonight. Again let me say to Major