

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

□ 2115

WHY THE GOP FAILED TO DELIVER ON REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MEEHAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I just left the Committee on Rules. Here we are on Wednesday of Reform Week and the Committee on Rules has stated that we are not going to do any reform this week. That is right, Reform Week.

This is the week that we have been waiting for for an entire year when Members will have an opportunity to try to change the way Congress does business, to try to make it, for example, illegal for a Member of Congress who is indicted and convicted directly because of their official actions from collecting a pension. This was a week when we were going to deal with legislation that would prevent the revolving door where Members of Congress come in and serve for a set period of time and then go out the door and make millions and millions of dollars paid for by special interests.

This was the Reform Week, Mr. Speaker, that we were going to do campaign finance reform, the most important reform that we could possibly enact if we are going to change the way Congress does business. The American people have been demanding campaign finance reform.

We have seen throughout this legislative session an increase in the amount of money that special interest PAC's are contributing to Members of Congress. We have seen the Republican National Committee and the political parties taking millions of dollars more than 2 years ago in this cycle, and we have seen a direct correlation between what is being debated on the floor of the House of Representatives and who the top contributors are to Members of Congress and to the Republican Party.

Now here at the last minute on Wednesday night, we are leaving tomorrow, we are not going to do campaign finance reform, it has been delayed again. The American people are fed up and disgusted with the inability of the Congress to pass real campaign finance reform.

I remember when President Bush indicated that he was going to veto the bill that was being debated in the House of Representatives, and the House of Representatives and the Senate rushed to get that bill passed and over to the President so he could veto it.

Last year, last session, we saw in the United States Senate campaign finance

reform die again. I have been part of a bipartisan group of Members of Congress and a bicameral group of Members of Congress fighting to come up with a campaign finance reform bill. We have 21 Democratic supporters of that bill and 20 Republican supporters of that bill. We have editorial support from every major newspaper all across the country. Now is the time to enact campaign finance reform.

The President has indicated that he supports a bipartisan approach. The President in his State of the Union Address right here before this body urged the Congress, urged the United States Senate to pass campaign finance reform and specifically asked the Congress to pass a bipartisan bill.

Now we see that we are not going to get any kind of campaign finance reform this week. In fact, there is no Reform Week, no Reform Week after all of the publicity and everything else that went on with this Congress going to change the way this Congress does business.

Why? Because the Republicans have offered a bill that increases the amount of money that is going to be put into the process. That is right, not limits, increases the amount of money. The Republican bill vastly increases nearly all of the contribution limits set in current law.

Campaign finance reform should be about limiting the influence of money on Congress, not expanding it. The Republican bill, for example, will allow an individual to contribute up to \$310,000 to campaigns and political parties in a single election cycle. Think of it, that is more than 10 times the current legal limit. They want to put more money into this corrupting process. No one would believe it, but that is exactly what is before the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives.

According to the Republican bill, an individual could conceivably donate, get this, \$3.1 million to State and national parties, cumulatively. Think about it, \$3.1 million. We are going to open up this process so the more money you have, the more influence you are going to have.

The Republican bill codifies the soft money loophole in the current law. This bill vastly increases the role of national parties in local elections. Just what America is looking for, isn't it?

The party bosses in Washington are going to decide to put hundreds of thousands of dollars into individual districts all over America. That is exactly fundamentally what is wrong with the system. That is exactly and fundamentally the opposite of what Americans all over this country are demanding.

This Congress should have done better. The Republican bill would vastly increase the contributions on every area. The Republican bill would actually not limit spending like the Democratic bill and the bipartisan bill would do. This Republican bill is an absolute disaster.

Guess why they are not going to have it come up this week? Because there are moderate Republicans who know this is a sham. There are moderate Republicans who know that this is a fraud. They cannot get the votes for this disgusting, regressive piece of legislation that has no business on the floor of this House.

I would hope that as we debate campaign finance reform for an hour coming up that we would find a way to call Members of Congress, find a way to get Members of Congress to wake up and realize that we need to change this system, and the way to change this system is not to go home tomorrow afternoon at 3:00 and fail on campaign finance reform.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYWORTH). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that in light of the fact that the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is not present, I ask that his name and my name be reversed in the list of special orders tonight so we can proceed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DEFICIT HAS FALLEN AS A RESULT OF THIS CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. BONILLA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to commend my colleagues who have succeeded in cutting spending. Cutting spending, Mr. Speaker, that is something that has not occurred in this body for 40 years. The news is out, the deficit has fallen as a result of this Congress' historic and unprecedented budget restraint.

According to yesterday's Congressional Budget Office mid-season review, this country's deficit has been cut nearly in half, and that is wonderful news for all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, making cuts is not easy. Just like making cuts and restraining ourselves from spending in our very own homes is not easy, but it is necessary to preserve the opportunity for our children's future.

Last year, here in the Capitol I had my two young children, Alicia, who is 11 and my son, Austin, who is 7, here in the Capitol watching what I do at work and it struck me how profound the decisions are that we make in this chamber and how critical sometimes the votes that we cast are to their future.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today for the future of our children. We possess,

each one of us in this Chamber, a voting card that is ironically just about the same size as a credit card, a Visa or Mastercard, that most Americans carry in their pockets. This credit card for 40 years has run up the deficit, a trillion-dollar deficit that we have now, bills that we are going to be paying in the future even if we were to cut spending drastically for years to come now.

We have a lot of catching up to do, Mr. Speaker. This voting card that we have has been put in the electronic voting card slots here for many years running up deficits that our children, as I looked at my children's faces last week, I felt very sad for the fact that we have so many years of catching up to do to cut spending so that we can preserve their future, Mr. Speaker, so that when they grow up, they still have the same opportunities that we have in this country now to live the American dream, as I did.

I come from a neighborhood, low-income neighborhood, primarily Spanish-speaking, on the south side of San Antonio, and I had no special privilege when I grew up. All I had was opportunity guaranteed by this wonderful country of ours. But at the time I was not saddled with the tremendous deficit that the Congress had left behind; therefore, as I grew up, and my father often had to work two jobs to send us to school, he was not faced with looming mega interest rates and deficits in his future that we are going to saddle our ability as a family to prosper.

That opportunity could be threatened, Mr. Speaker, in the future because if we keep running up the charges with these credit cards that we vote with, we are going to threaten the future for our children. My constituents understand this as well, Mr. Speaker. They know, I represent one of the poorest districts in the Nation, they understand how difficult it is to live on a budget.

These are tough choices that we must make and must continue to make. When we cut the deficit and we have a balanced budget, we are going to have lower interest rates for our children as well in the future. When they want to buy a car, when they want to borrow money to go to school, to go to college, when they want to buy, make that first purchase to buy a stereo or books for college or anything that they need to sustain themselves, they are going to have lower interest rates as we continue, as this Congress has done, in cutting spending to cut the deficit and balance the budget.

It is with our children's hearts in mind, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to continue working to cut spending in this Congress, because I know that is what the American people want.

I came from the private sector, never ever having held public office before being elected in 1992, and I remember what it is like to be in the private sector making tough decisions to balance the budget at your business, in your

homes, at the dining room table each night having to decide what you have to do to make the future of your family sustain itself and not with a deficit but with a promising future because you are paying your bills as you are going along.

I promise, Mr. Speaker, that as long as I am here serving in this wonderful Congress, I am going to use this credit card wisely and continue to cut spending for the future of our children in this country because, Mr. Speaker, I ask if we are not here to do this for the future of our children, I ask what are we doing here, what are we here for in the first place?

REFORM WEEK HAS CEASED TO EXIST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, Reform Week, it has been on a life support system for the past few weeks, but now the plug has been pulled and Reform Week has been officially terminated.

The Republican leadership announced less than 2 hours ago that Reform Week, the much-heralded and touted week that was going to turn the House of Representatives back over to the American people, has been postponed once again. This is the same Reform Week that had become the Reform Hour and now has simply ceased to exist.

What happened? Well, rather than actually engaging in real reform, the Republican leadership in this House had decided to bring to the floor of the House legislation that would not actually reform the system but, quite to the contrary, would make it worse.

Ten of my Republican colleagues circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter this week that said, and I quote, "Instead of leveling the playing field in elections, this bill will result in greater incumbent protection. The bill actually increases the amounts that wealthy individuals can contribute to Federal elections." This is the letter. I am not making it up.

That is right, they are right. Under current law, an individual can give \$25,000. Under the Republican campaign finance reform bill, an individual will be able to give up to \$3.1 million. I have to repeat that because the magnitude is startling, it truly is. But it is not startling when you consider that the Speaker of the House said not too long ago that rather than less money in the system in terms of campaigns, we need more money into the system. That is why we had this piece of legislation.

Again, an individual will be able to give up to \$3.1 million. Current law again, individuals can contribute \$25,000. It is mind-boggling to think of how they have turned this concept of reform into something that is totally unimaginable to anyone here, let alone the American public who truly believes

that we need to reform our campaign finance system, and we do.

This is not reform. As my Republican colleagues also said in their "Dear Colleague," and I quote again,

The average American will be left even further behind in the Washington money chase as they are frozen out of political process. Given the fact that only about 1 percent of Americans gave contributions over \$200 or more during the last election, it is indisputable that raising the individual contributions limit will only increase the influence of the wealthy on our political process.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder the House of Representatives is at one of its all-time lowest approval ratings in history. The American people have lost confidence in this institution's ability to lead and in this institution's ability to do the right thing.

□ 2130

We have no business considering legislation that will make it even harder for ordinary individuals to participate in the political process and make it easier for the rich to participate in this process.

This bill is a sham, just in the same way that Reform Week is a sham. Reforming the process has deteriorated into providing political cover to politicians who came to Washington and they promised to make a difference. Well, it is not going to work.

Even once again the Republican "Dear Colleague" says, "The fact is that H.R. 3760; that is, the Republican campaign finance reform bill, will not give you political cover as we head into Reform Week."

We do need to pass real campaign finance reform so that hard-working Americans can participate in the political process and that the special interests are limited in the political process. And doing that would go a very, very long way toward restoring the American people's faith in our ability to govern our own House, and it would restore their faith and put in the faith and the confidence and the trust that they would like to put in to those people who are elected every 2 years to do the people's business.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to replace the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] on the list of 5-minute special orders.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYWORTH). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

DRUG ABUSE AND LACK OF LEADERSHIP IN THE WHITE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MICA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues, I serve on the committee that has been dealing with the FBI files