

When I came to the Congress, I had a matter that I wanted to put in front of the Committee on the Judiciary having to do with the death penalty for assassination of the President, God forbid that that should ever occur, and some other features. On the first time that I proposed this to the Committee on the Judiciary, I was outvoted 30 to 15. Fifteen Republicans voted with me, two Democrats voted on the other side. How could I lose 30 to 15? By the use of the chairman at that time of the proxy vote, which he had in hand, and voted his colleagues on the committee no, no, no, against my proposition.

We have eliminated that forever. The Committee on Rules was bright enough to be able to do so. We reendorsed it today.

I yield to the gentleman from California [Mr. DREIER].

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my friend for his very fine statement. I would say that we did a survey of committee chairmen and others in leadership positions on the impact of proxy voting, to see whether or not they liked it. It has made it, in fact, more difficult, but in trying to get the Congress to comply with the laws that other Americans have to comply with, showing up for work seems to be sort of a natural. We do have that.

But committee chairmen, in the survey that we had that was sent back, overwhelmingly supported the idea of maintaining the elimination of proxy voting. My friend was entirely right on that statement. I thank him for his compliment.

Mr. GEKAS. I thank the gentleman. This is a historic day. Speaker Jonathan Dayton in 1797, the Speaker of the House duly elected by a political process then in the Fifth Congress, would be proud of us if he were here today. We have adopted rules, put our election of committee people into action, and now we are prepared for the work of the people and the agenda of the 105th Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because we are about to begin the work of the people's business and all is not right in the House of the people. All is not right with the person who is supposed to lead the 105th Congress to do the business of the people. There is a cloud hanging over the chair of the Speaker, a cloud that has never existed in the history of this Chamber of the people, a chamber that is constitutionally charged to carry out the sacred business of representative democracy.

And yet, we are asked to carry on the people's business like nothing happened, like we haven't swept anything under the rug, like the faint odor of a political deal is not seeping into this hallowed Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of the time when a fellow Texan, Jim Wright sat up there under similar circumstances. There was a time when a cloud hung over his head, when the

position of the Speaker, the chair of the third highest elected representative of the people was called into question.

And, Speaker Jim Wright did the right thing. Speaker Wright did what was good for the House of Representatives and the Nation. He cleared the skies over the speaker's chair. He took himself out of the way of interrupting the legislative course that we now are charged with setting. He didn't wait for the Ethics Committee to find a stain on the Speaker's chair. He knew in his conscience what was best for the country and so does every Member in this body.

Do we really want to begin the 105th Congress with the first mark on the Speaker's chair? I think not and I'm sure all right thinking Members feel the same. Jim Wright knew how to bow out with a sense of class and what a true "higher ethical standard" for the Speaker really is.

Do we really want to return to the "in your face" style of politics on the very first day of this new Congress? Do we really want to begin a new Congress waiting to see what the Speaker's fate is for his admitted ethical transgressions? Do we really want to be led by someone who is destined to be disciplined by the 105th Congress?

I respectfully submit that the example of former Speaker Jim Wright is one that needs to be the model for this righteous body. Anything less is an insult to the dignity and the integrity of the office of Speaker.

Mr. Wright acted on behalf of his country and stepped aside. Mr. GINGRICH also knows the right thing to do.

LET THE PUBLIC DECIDE CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT

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

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Let the Public Decide Campaign Finance Reform Act. Two developments over the last year have demonstrated that for all practical purposes there are no longer any campaign finance rules in this country. One development is the series of court decisions which have resulted in special interest groups being able to get around virtually all limits of existing campaign finance law. They are allowed to do so by engaging in so called independent expenditures or by issuing promotion schemes which maintain the fiction that such groups are not involved in individual campaigns. The second development is the recent series of news stories involving large contributions of so-called soft money to both political parties. The result is that wealthy people and groups can skirt the intention of Congress to limit the amount of influence that wealthy individuals or organizations can have on the political process.

Merely tinkering with existing campaign laws will have no real effect. It will do no good for instance, to pass feel good legislation which would cut the \$5,000 limit on contributions by political action committees if companies who finance those political action committees can make indirect expenditures 20 or 30 times as large through other means.

For me, the last election was the last straw on campaign finance. I honestly believe that this problem can only be addressed with a flat

out elimination of all private money in general elections. That will eliminate the soft money problem and many of the other spectacles we have seen recently. The legislation I am pushing contains a congressional finding that the existing system has so corrupted public confidence in its own form of government that Congress must take major steps for campaign finance which so far have been blocked by the courts. We are doing so because some constitutional scholars suggest that we may be able to move the Supreme Court to change its mind if Congress makes such a finding. But, if the Supreme Court continues to block the kind of reforms I have in my bill, the bill provides for an immediate consideration by the Congress of a constitutional amendment which would give Congress the authority it needs to regulate campaign spending.

The only way to fundamentally change the current system is to take out all private money from financing general elections. I make no apology for reaching that conclusion. In a democracy, elections are not private events; they are the most public events that occur in our national life. Elections belong to the people and they should be financed that way, not by the well-heeled and well-connected.

The Let the Public Decide Campaign Reform Act would:

Forbid all private funding in general elections. But, the public must understand that political campaign cannot be financed through immaculate conception. Elections would be financed by voluntary contributions from individuals to a Grass Roots Good Citizenship Fund. To raise the necessary funding, the Federal Election Commission would be required to conduct a major national television advertising campaign informing the public of the opportunity to eliminate the influence of interest groups on elections by making voluntary contributions to that fund. Those voluntary contributions would be supplemented by a one-tenth of 1 percent to be paid by all corporations with profits above \$10 million.

Eliminate the "soft money" loophole, which allows huge amounts of money from wealthy individuals and corporations to go to political parties and benefit congressional candidates.

Establish spending limits on how much congressional candidates can spend, with some flexibility because of the different costs to run for office in different parts of the country.

Allow the American public to determine the amount of money each candidate receives in the general election by basing the amount on the electoral support that the candidate or his preceding party nominees received in that district over the last 5 elections. It would also allow third-party and independent candidates to receive public funding based on their demonstrated public support.

Allow private money to be contributed only to primary elections based on the principle that each political party has its own basic constituencies, and that the parties themselves have a role in deciding how their own nominees are chosen;

Distinguish in primary elections between broad-based "little people" PAC's and "High Roller" PAC's, and limit contributions from "High Roller" PAC's.

Under my bill, the American people themselves would actually be able to decide how much will be spent on congressional campaigns and how much each candidate will receive. Democracy cannot function if American

citizens do not themselves take responsibility for supporting the most public events that occur in this country—our own national elections.

REDUCING THE TAX RATE ON CAPITAL GAINS

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I have taken out this special order, and as we all saw, I got in the chair before I was able to deliver it, so I am pleased that my friend, the gentleman from Florida, was able to deliver the first special order of the 105th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken this time out to talk about legislation which I very proudly introduced today with a number of my colleagues. We know that the message that came from last November's election was that the American people want us to put the partisan political pyrotechnics aside and they want us to do a job.

I am very gratified that we saw Democrats and Republicans alike, embrace what for lack of a better term, have to be considered traditional Republican themes. The themes that the President ran on, the themes that Republicans and many Democratic candidates for Congress ran on, were balancing the budget, trying to reduce the size and scope of government, reducing the tax burden on working Americans. Those are the sorts of things that I believe a majority of this institution want to see us deal with.

I think we do have an opportunity to proceed in a bipartisan way. We have gone through an extraordinarily difficult and challenging day, and the next couple of weeks are going to be tough, but I hope and pray that we will be able to put the battles that we have seen in the media over the past couple of weeks behind us and do what I believe the American people want us to do, and that is govern.

I have done what I believe is my bit here on the opening day. I am very pleased that I was able to join with Democrats and Republicans in introducing legislation which will go a long way toward dealing with one of the problems that we have in this country, and that is lack of available capital.

What I have done is introduced a bill which is numbered H.R. 14. It is H.R. 14 because it is going to take the top 28-percent rate on capital gains and reduce that to 14 percent as a top rate.

In years past we have heard this rhetoric that reducing the tax on capital gains is nothing but a tax cut for the rich. But I was gratified that in the Presidential campaign, Bill Clinton talked about reducing the tax rate on capital gains for homeowners. He wanted to target it. I happen to believe very strongly that rather than targeting it, we should allow the American people to make a determination as to exactly which capital asset they have that

they want to sell and have a lower rate on capital gains for. I want them to be able to make that decision themselves.

In the past we have heard that there is a tremendous cost to reducing the tax rate on capital gains. The fact of the matter is we have, with this bill, done a great deal of study on it. It is not only a theoretical study, but it is empirical evidence which has shown, going all the way back to 1921 when Andrew Mellon was Treasury Secretary under President Warren G. Harding, reducing that top rate increases revenues to the Treasury. John F. Kennedy we know did it in the early 1960's, Ronald Reagan did it in the 1980's, and we have a good opportunity to do this today.

What will it create? It will create, I believe, a tremendous flow in revenues to the Treasury. Why? Because there is between \$7 trillion and \$8 trillion of locked-in capital that is there. People are not willing to sell it because of the punitive tax rate that exists. So, clearly in the first years we would see a great boost.

In 1993, when I assembled the zero capital gains tax caucus, we found over a 7-year period a 15-percent capital gains tax rate would increase the gross domestic product by \$1.3 trillion, create 1 million jobs, and generate \$220 billion in revenues to the Federal Treasury.

I am convinced that we can do this in a bipartisan way, so much so that of the original cosponsors, there are two Republicans and three Democrats. I am very pleased that my colleague, the gentlewoman from Kansas City, MO, KAREN MCCARTHY, has joined as a lead cosponsor of this; a great member of the Committee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, PHIL ENGLISH, who is beginning his second term, has joined in this; the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. JIM MORAN, a Democrat, has joined as an original cosponsor; and the leader of the Blue Dogs on this issue is the gentleman from Texas, Mr. RALPH HALL. So we have three Democrats and two Republicans.

While some pundits out there may like to argue that the era of bipartisanship is over, they are wrong, because on the opening day we have begun in a bipartisan way to deal with this very important question of reducing that top rate on capital gains to help middle-income wage earners and all Americans, and those at the bottom end of the spectrum, as we try to get capital into the inner city and other spots which are desperately in need, as Speaker GINGRICH mentioned in his acceptance speech today.

Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a very happy, prosperous, and healthy 1997.

AMERICA'S POLICIES IN CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] is recognized for 20 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to have this few minutes of conversation about a very important topic on this first day of Congress. Just a couple of days ago, on January 3d of this year, President Clinton announced his decision to suspend for the second time Title III of what is known as the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, otherwise known as the Helms-Burton law. This is a very significant event, and one which I fear is going to lead to lots more problems rather than solutions with relationships that we have in this western hemisphere, with the United States and Cuba and our allies.

Let me explain this and put it in context. Cuba has been a dictatorship under Fidel Castro for some 37 years. During that time I think the world is fully aware of the many human rights violations this dictator has committed and his regime has committed. I think the world is probably also fully aware that Cuba and Fidel Castro remain only one of two Communist dictatorships left after the fall of the Soviet Union and changes around the world and tendencies towards more democracies, as we have seen in the last decade or so.

It is shameful that we have today, only 90 miles across the ocean from the United States, just 90 miles away, a Communist dictatorship of the nature Fidel Castro runs. We have tried over the years since the failure of the Bay of Pigs, which indeed was tragic and a shameful part of our history, frankly, that we did not support that invasion fully as it should have been supported. We have tried numerous times since then in small, incremental ways, to either oust Fidel Castro or to change his policies. It should be abundantly clear to anyone who has observed this man over the years that he is not about to change his stripes. He is not about to give up his ruthless power. He is not going to do that voluntarily at least.

For those who wish democracy in Cuba, I can only say I hope there is democracy, like you do, but it is wishful thinking if you think it is going to come about as long as Fidel Castro is in power. The only way to see democracy in Cuba and to see our hemisphere Democratic and to have normal relations again with that small Nation state to the south is for Fidel Castro to leave office and for those who supported him for all these years to end that support.

Let me tell the Members the biggest problem facing us in seeing that accomplished in the current time frame. It is not from the Soviet Union. It does not exist anymore. It is not from Russia. It is not from some far-flung place. It is from our allies in Europe and in Canada and in Mexico who supply the currency, who supply the economic support necessary to prop up this regime, either directly through their governments, or more frequently, through companies or business entities that invest in Cuba that are involved