

Mr. HUTCHINSON. I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that has come up is why are freshmen seeming to have such an early impact on this race. I am a Democrat from Arkansas, a freshman, and the gentleman is a Republican from Arkansas, and it seemed to me that the ugly races were ones for open seats. Both the gentleman and I from Arkansas had different political perspectives, but it was ugly because of the presence of soft money.

I loved the line the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] used, getting rid of the biggest of the big money. These are not the \$1,000 donations we are talking about, but the \$50,000 or \$100,000 to the party that have so distorted the system. I commend the gentleman and the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] for his work. It truly is a bipartisan effort. I thank the gentleman for his effort.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I certainly concur that this has been a good effort we put forth. The gentleman and I had an opportunity in Arkansas when he was in the General Assembly, we worked in separate parties on election reform in Arkansas, and I am delighted we can set the example here in our Nation's Capital, and I hope we can have the same success as well.

If Members look at this bill, and my friend, the gentleman from Maine, described the elements of this bill, it focuses on soft money. It bans soft money, and any serious reform has to start with that. But it also increases disclosure.

I believe we need to provide information to the American public so they will know who is spending what in a campaign, and that they can find out that information in a timely fashion. That is what our bill does this year. It does those two things.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, our bill, besides providing a ban on soft money and increasing disclosure, I think it is unique because it is a product of bipartisanship, and because it has come through in that fashion I believe it has the best chance for success this year.

I believe that the timing is right, and that momentum is gathering for campaign finance reform for a couple of reasons. First of all, the Senate hearings have focused the American public's attention on the problem of soft money. I hope that the American public who is listening today, that they will write in, that they will encourage their Congressmen to address this serious issue.

Second, I have been encouraged by the response of leaders from both sides of the aisle, with a growing sense that we need to do something about this. The gentleman from California, Mr. BILL THOMAS, chairman of the Committee on House Oversight that will have the hearings on campaign finance has indicated a willingness to hold hearings. I commend him for that. He is a critical part of this effort, and I hope

we can have those hearings this fall so we can move this legislation forward.

Finally, we have had encouragement even from leaders like the gentleman from Texas, Mr. DICK ARMEY, who has indicated that the freshmen are going in the right direction, that he is anxious to hear more details about this plan, and I was delighted to hear this.

Most importantly, the encouragement comes from the voters, from letters from constituents who say their voice is being diminished by the vastness, the millions of dollars in corporate and labor money that flows to the parties. They say, where is our voice? Where is the voice of the average voter, the voter out there who works day in and day out, the contributor, the small contributor to a campaign?

I was delighted also that this last week we had encouragement from very significant leaders from both parties. Former President George Bush, former President Jimmy Carter, and former President Gerald Ford all indicated support for campaign finance reform.

I like what former President George Bush said in his letter of June 19, 1997. He said, "We must encourage the broadest possible participation by individuals in financing elections. Whatever reform is enacted should go the extra mile in demanding fullest possible disclosure for all campaign contributions."

"I would favor getting rid of so-called 'soft money' contributions but this principle should be applied to all groups including Labor."

Speaking from this side of the aisle, I certainly believe that the soft money ban should include not only corporations but also labor. It does that. It does that, because that is the ban that is needed. It is equal and fair to all sides.

Mr. Speaker, I will enter the three letters from the former Presidents into the RECORD.

The letters referred to are as follows.

JULY 10, 1997.

Hon. NANCY KASSEBAUM BAKER,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR KASSEBAUM: Our system in financing federal election campaigns is in serious trouble. To remedy these failings requires prompt action by the President and the House and Senate. I strongly hope the Congress in cooperation with the White House will enact Campaign Reform legislation by the forthcoming elections in 1998.

Public officials and concerned citizens. Republicans and Democrats alike, have already identified important areas of agreement. These include (1) the need to end huge uncontrolled "soft money" contributions to the national parties and their campaign committees, and to bar solicitation of "soft money" from all persons, parties and organized labor by federal officeholders and candidates for any political organizations; (2) the need to provide rapid and comprehensive disclosure of contributions and expenditures in support of, or opposition to, candidates for federal office, and (3) the need to repair the system of campaign finance law enforcement by assuring that it is effective and independent of politics.

A significant bi-partisan effort across party lines can achieve a legislative consen-

sus in campaign reforms that will help to restore the confidence of our citizens in their federal government.

I commend you and former Vice President Mondale for your leadership on behalf of campaign reform.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD.

JULY 17, 1997

Hon. WALTER MONDALE,
Minneapolis, MN.

TO VICE PRESIDENT WALTER MONDALE: I am pleased to join former Presidents Bush and Ford in expressing hope that this Congress will enact meaningful campaign finance reform legislation. For the future of our democracy, and as our experience may be emulated by other nations, prompt and fundamental repair of our system for financing federal elections is required.

The most basic and immediate step should include an end to "soft money," whether in the form of corporate or union treasury contributions to federal campaign, or large and unregulated contributions from individuals. The initial step should also include measures that provide for complete and immediate disclosures of political contributions and expenses.

To accomplish these and other needed reforms and to lay the basis for future ones, we also need to develop a strong national consensus about the objectives of reform. It will take more than just the action of this Congress, but fundamental reform is essential to the task of repairing public trust in government and in our leaders. We must take significant steps to assure voters that public policy is determined by the exercise of their franchise rather than a broken and suspect campaign finance system.

Please extend to Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker my appreciation for the work that she has undertaken with you to advance the essential cause of bipartisan campaign finance reform.

Sincerely,

JIMMY CARTER.

JUNE 19, 1997.

Senator NANCY KASSEBAUM BAKER,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR KASSEBAUM, First let me commend you and the former Vice President, Ambassador Mondale, for taking a leadership role in trying to bring about campaign reform.

I hope the current Congress will enact Campaign Reform legislation.

We must encourage the broadest possible participation by individuals in financing elections. Whatever reform is enacted should go the extra mile in demanding fullest possible disclosure of all campaign contributions.

I would favor getting rid of so called "soft money" contributions but this principle should be applied to all groups including Labor.

I congratulate you for working for better campaign finance law enforcement.

With my respects to you and Vice President Mondale I am, sincerely,

GEORGE BUSH.

URGING COLLEAGUES TO JOIN IN SUPPORT OF BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, this is truly an historic day in our Nation's history.

Both parties recognize the challenges we face as far as recurring structural deficits. They came together and through some hard-fought negotiations, some compromises, some give-and-takes, it was announced today that we have reached an agreement on a balanced budget plan that will bring the books finally in balance for the first time since 1969, when I was in the first grade.

Yet, just to strike a cautionary note, this does provide the largest expansion of educational programs in the Nation's history, the largest expansion of children's health care since 1965, when Medicaid was passed. But I have always viewed this as the first step of a two-step process.

The second step that we have to begin working on right away is some long-term fixes with the entitlement programs, Medicare, Social Security, which according to all the demographics and all the analyses are due to explode starting early next century when the baby boomers start to retire.

That is the second step as far as maintaining the fiscal responsibility and the discipline started today, and that will continue into the next century.

We also face other challenges in this country and before this Congress. One of the big issues I came to Congress on and which I feel there is no bigger issue that we should be dealing with in trying to find a resolution is the role of big money in the political system.

That is why I was proud when I was called and I joined the Bipartisan Task Force on Campaign Finance Reform, working with my five freshman Republican colleagues and six Democratic colleagues. I commend the gentleman from Maine [Mr. TOM ALLEN] and the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. ASA HUTCHINSON] for the leadership they have shown during the course of this process, which has been educational for all of us.

It has been very difficult. There were internal and outside forces doing everything they could to try to scuttle what we were trying to accomplish, because anyone who is a student of this institution realizes that nothing significant has ever been achieved without some bipartisan cooperation.

So it was with that attitude that we joined the task force, trying to work out a compromise, finding common areas of agreement and, as freshmen, proposing our own campaign finance reform bill. This is incremental in every sense of the word. This is not the type of comprehensive overhaul that I personally would have liked to have seen, but it is probably the best chance we have of passing anything in this session of Congress. What it does do is it targets the biggest, as the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] said, the biggest of the big contributions in the political system, the soft money contributions.

Just to highlight the problem we have with soft money contributions

right now, I am holding up a chart that shows the growth of soft money to the political parties, both Republican and Democrat, over the last three election cycles.

As everyone can see, in 1996, it exploded soft money contributions, close to \$140 million being contributed to the Republican Party, a little over \$120 million to the Democratic Party. I submit, this is just the tip of the iceberg. We really have not seen anything yet until we are able to take some action in this session of Congress.

That is why I am very proud of the product we have produced in the course of the negotiations. I am very proud, in a bipartisan fashion, of the atmosphere in which we came together to try to do what we feel is really in the best interests of the country.

I would encourage my colleagues to get behind this piece of legislation. We are already seeing a lot of support within the freshman class on both sides of the aisle, but obviously it is not until some of the more senior Members start to weigh in on this legislation that we will see any true hope of getting this thing scheduled for the House floor, having it debated, and finally, calling a vote on what I think is a crucial and vitally important issue facing our country today.

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I encourage the leadership in the House to give it due consideration. I think it will be a great victory if we can at least bring it to the House floor. I ask Americans around the country who are listening in tonight to start calling in, start writing letters and hold their Representatives' feet to the fire on this very simple and incremental approach to campaign finance reform.

I believe that if Members in this Congress cannot get behind this, cannot cast a vote in favor of what the freshman bipartisan task force is proposing in the course of this finance reform, then really they are really not interested in true campaign finance reform.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KIND. I yield to the gentleman from Maine.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. KIND] has been one of the leaders in our task force and has done an absolutely superb job. Mr. KIND makes a very good point. That point is this. If this Congress, if this Congress spends months investigating potential campaign finance abuses, almost all of which are traceable to the amount and influence of soft money and then fails to act, we will all be embarrassed. I know that is why you are here, RON, and it is why I am here. We do not want to be embarrassed. We want to legislate, not just investigate. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, hopefully something good will come out of the investigations that we are seeing on

Capitol Hill that will highlight the problem of soft money in the political process. If there was not any soft money in the last election cycle, we would not be having these investigations today focussing on the role of soft money in the campaigns.

I think it is vitally important that not only the Members here have the courage to step up and recognize the problem facing the country but people back home start weighing in on this issue and start letting their voices, their concerns be heard on this form of legislation so that we can finally have it up for a debate and a vote in this session.

SOFT MONEY

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

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleagues tonight to congratulate the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] and the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] to provide the outstanding leadership on the bipartisan freshman task force in developing the Bipartisan Campaign Integrity Act, which I am proud to be a cosponsor.

I think it is important for folks to understand there are a lot of problems with campaign funding and the methods that we use to raise funds for campaigns. Campaigns cost too much money. Candidates spend far too much time raising money. There is a perception out there, a perception of abuse. There is a perception that large contributions come from corporations, that come from labor unions and large contributions from wealthy individuals are corrupting the system.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that this is a bipartisan problem. Both political parties, Democrat and Republican Party alike, have a problem with regard to the amount of soft money that has gone into the system. As Members have mentioned earlier, this started out as a relatively small amount of money that was supposed to be used for building political parties. But in the last two political cycles, 1992 to 1996, the amount of soft money has quadrupled in the system. Today both, or last cycle, both political parties raised nearly \$130 million of soft money. Again, what is this money?

This is money that comes from corporations. This is money that comes from labor unions or this is money that comes from wealthy individuals who have exceeded the normal contribution limits. What this bill does is it eliminates, it bans soft money that is going to the national parties. The reason that I am so supportive of this measure is I believe that, if we are going to change the campaign process, the fundraising process, it is our responsibility