

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

to start at home. It is our responsibility to deal with our own political parties. It is our responsibility to require them to clean up their act first.

Let me say this, there are some things that this does not do. I think it is important for our colleagues to be aware of the things that this does not do. It does not initiate a system of public financing for congressional campaigns. There are many who might support that. There are many who would be opposed to that. This bill does not do that. It does not put spending limits on how much money can be spent in a political campaign.

There are those who would argue that that is simply a benefit to incumbents. And it does not restrain the ability of independent parties to speak out about candidates or officeholders. In fact it very clearly establishes their right to do that. But what it does do is this: It eliminates soft money, those large contributions. It eliminates competition between the political parties and their candidates. Oddly enough, in the current campaign financing laws we have created a mechanism where people can give money to the party or give money to candidates, but it makes it difficult for them to do both. It eliminates that competition. It actually expands the role that parties can play in helping their candidates. The goal there is to allow candidates to work more closely with their parties rather than seeking support of special interest groups.

Mr. Speaker, I would just urge all of my colleagues to examine this bill. This is an incremental process, but it is the first step in restoring integrity to a system that the American public clearly believes is broken. I would urge all of my colleagues to examine this bill and support it as it moves through the process.

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

Mr. HILL. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I just want to commend and congratulate my colleague, the gentleman from Montana [Mr. HILL], in his role in this whole process. I do not think anyone in the task force had more energy and more analysis and insight on what we were trying to accomplish than the gentleman from Montana [Mr. HILL] did. It was a pleasure working with him, attending the meetings with him.

There were some difficult times as there always is in the course of give and take in negotiations and that, but as far as anyone exhibiting and displaying a true depth of knowledge, regarding a very complex and a very difficult issue, the gentleman from Montana [Mr. HILL] ranked right up there at the top. I commend him and just wanted to tell the American people what a fine job and what a pleasure it has been to work with him in the course of this process.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I would just comment that

I believe that everyone who worked on this task force came with a commitment to wanting to reform the system and to make it work to restore the integrity of the system and the belief of the American people. The gentleman from Wisconsin played an outstanding role in that.

I enjoyed very much working with him and all the Members of the task force. It was surprising to me how well we came together because we focused on those values that we all agree upon. We found so many of those values that we agree upon because we want to restore integrity to the system. I thank the gentleman and again I would urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

[Mrs. TAUSCHER addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, first I would like to join in my colleagues in the previous speaker's comments about the accolades and plaudits of my colleagues on this bipartisan freshman task force, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN], of course, and the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] and the fine work and leadership that they demonstrated in this process.

In fact I was very honored to be a part of what I think is a very historic freshman task force in an effort to reform campaign finances in our country. Yes, the subject was controversial. As a freshman for the first time, we all have recent and very personal encounters with the campaign finance laws of this Nation. To augment our experience, we had several hearings with groups and individuals with a variety of expertise in this area. It was very constructive for myself personally and for the rest of the Members. It became an environment in which we got to know not just the other Members of the other party and Members in our own class, but we got to know the subject matter a great deal and a lot better than we had before we entered.

Almost all of us agreed to one conclusion after this, that the system is broken. Those disagreements that we may have had, and they developed around some of the parts and the existing parts, but we all agreed that the system and how it is broken has a high priority in our consideration for solutions.

We want equitable solutions and we want solutions to States which have varying sizes and varying populations, varying mixes in the media and the media markets. Several facets of this

issue that bore close scrutiny included soft money, as we have already heard, campaign finance disclosure, campaign spending limits, limits on individual and political action committees and their contributions. Also we considered free or reduced-cost TV rates for candidates.

It was interesting to watch our legislation evolve from a broad-based, cure all, almost certain to fail, too narrow specific language that contained no poison pills. We think our product, the Bipartisan Campaign Integrity Act of 1997, contains something for everyone. It is not so broad based that it will die of its own weight. I think that our bill, although it does not solve all of the problems nor solve all of the campaign finance ills, at least makes an honest attempt and a start at it, to correct what is wrong.

The fact that some of our leaders in each party have expressed problems with it means, and this means to me that this legislation is truly bipartisan. There are some elements that, yes, I would probably want to polish around the edges of the margins, but I am satisfied this bill as a whole is a good one. It satisfies several fundamental problems and it does deserve passage.

I am personally in favor of totally eliminating soft money. Of course this means making other sources of funding available such as increasing Federal contribution limits and/or removing coordinated limits between parties and candidates. I also think that most of the money in a campaign ought to come from the district in which the person is elected. This would mean that the people who have a vested interest, for example, in Nevada's Second District would have a greater influence in its politics rather than some outsider. With the population in Nevada so spread out, it can be costly to run a campaign, either as an incumbent or as a challenger. There have been much smaller districts with elections pending, over \$6 million for each candidate. That is far too much money to be elected to the House of Representatives.

The amount of money any one individual or PAC can contribute ought to be limited. Too frequently, large donors are allowed greater access to influence than is ordinarily afforded most regular constituents.

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

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

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that the gentleman from Nevada [Mr. GIBBONS] has been an outstanding member of this task force. It has been a pleasure working with him. I agree with him. As he described the process that we went through, he made a very important point. He talked about all the different, some of the different ideas that are out there and he recognized what we did, which was essentially agree on what we could agree on, and not try to do the big