

the sort of environment that we can put forward economically and hope to have the next century be another American century. That is why I have joined with Congressman PAXON on the House side in sponsoring a bill that would sunset the current Internal Revenue code by the end of the year 2000.

What we hope to do with this is start the great national debate about what sort of tax system should be in place. Should we go to a flat tax or a consumption-based tax, or truly do tax simplification? But let's set the time-frame and a goal and work toward it like we have done on balancing the budget, when we said that, in 7 years, we would balance the budget and then we will figure out how we are going to get that. That is how we have done and that is why we are going to get it balanced. Let's do the same on fundamental tax reform. Let's set a time certain in which to accomplish it and let's begin the great national debate.

I hope a number of my colleagues will join me in sponsoring this effort to sunset this Tax Code and start the next millennium in this Nation with a taxation system that is pro-family, pro-growth and pro-American. We can do that and start this great debate now. I hope my colleagues will join in sponsoring both of those bills.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, few if any issues before the Senate this year are more important than campaign finance reform.

Americans from all walks of life are fed up with the current campaign financing system and its excessive reliance on unlimited contributions that make conflict of interest a way of life. They are fed up with a campaign process driven by the high cost of television commercials. They are fed up with candidates who spend more time raising money from special interests instead of serving the public interest.

And who can blame them?

In recent years, the amount of money spent in Presidential campaigns has doubled every 4 years. Senate and House races now cost millions of dollars. Election campaigns have become more and more negative, with misleading TV spots that traffic in half-truths or outright falsehoods. And corrupting and corroding it all are the massive abusers of the current loophole-ridden campaign financing laws.

The constant hunt for campaign dollars demeans our electoral process and

undermines the very foundation of our country. We have the best political system that money can buy, and it's a disgrace to everything our democracy stands for.

The time for change is now. We must take elections off the auction block. We must limit campaign spending. We must return the election process to the people, in which every voter is equal, no matter what their income, or what job they hold, or where they live.

Democrats understand this. Democrats in the Senate are unanimously committed to campaign finance reform that limits campaign spending. All 45 Democrats in the U.S. Senate have pledged their support for the bipartisan McCain-Feingold bill. President Clinton, too, has clearly stated his unequivocal support for this important legislation. He has taken the extraordinary step of announcing his intention to use his authority under the U.S. Constitution to require Congress to meet in special session if it fails to take up this urgently needed reform.

But where are the Republicans?

Have they united behind a proposal—any proposal?

Are they willing to join with Democrats to clean up the cesspool, and limit the amount of money and the power of money in American elections?

Sadly, the answer is "no."

The Republican prescription for these flagrant abuses is more money in politics, not less. They prescribe an even larger overdose of money for elections, in which their friends in big businesses and their lobbyists and special interests can write more checks and fatter checks to the Republican Party.

Their recipe for campaign finance reform is to tilt the balance even more unfairly against American workers. They want to increase the power of large corporations, and squash even the limited power that American workers have today. Republicans want to handcuff labor unions in the battle for a living wage, for decent health care for working families, and a secure retirement for the elderly. They want to silence union support for candidates who stand up and speak out on those basic issues.

In short, Republicans want to impose a gag rule on American workers.

The Republican antiworker scheme is a poison pill for campaign finance reform, and the Republicans admit it. The majority leader, Senator LOTT, told the Washington Times that his amendment would kill the bill because Democrats would mount a filibuster. He said, "I've set it up where they're going to be doing the filibustering."

Columnist Robert Novak agrees. Writing about the Republican amendment to impose a gag rule on workers, he says its "primary purpose in Congress is not to win Republican supporters for campaign reform but to lose Democratic supporters Republicans are divided between the many who bash labor to kill reform and the few who appease labor to save reform."

The Lott amendment is a killer amendment, because it unfairly punishes working Americans and their unions for participating in the elections. The Lott amendment bars unions from collecting dues from any workers—even members who voluntarily join the union and participate in setting its goals—unless those workers sign an authorization form to allow part of their union dues to be spent for political purposes.

This isn't reform—it's revenge. It's a blatant attempt to punish working Americans for their role in the 1996 elections—and an equally blatant attempt to silence working Americans in future elections.

Republicans intend this procedure to cripple any union's ability to participate in elections. They know that imposing such a requirement on any organization would have the same result. Yet, they don't propose it for the National Rifle Association or the big tobacco companies or the American Farm Bureau or the Chamber of Commerce. They don't ask corporations to get permission slips from their shareholders before the corporation can spend funds for political purposes. The Lott amendment should be called The Rampant Republican Hypocrisy Act of 1997. How hypocritical can they get?

The real measure of whether Republicans are serious about campaign finance reform is whether they will support honest limits on campaign spending.

The McCain-Feingold bill that all 45 Senate Democrats support will ban so-called soft money—the millions of dollars in campaign funds that today are virtually unregulated. This immense loophole in our current campaign laws allows contributions worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to be made to political parties. The parties then spend the money to help elect candidates for Federal office. While the amount of money that an individual voter can give to a candidate is limited to \$1,000 per campaign, candidates for Federal office can receive millions through the back door using this soft money loophole.

Clearly, any legislation worth the name reform must ban this shameful practice.

In addition, the McCain-Feingold bill limits the ability of outside groups to run ads supporting specific candidates. This practice has become another source of soft money for Federal candidates. If you don't have enough money in your own campaign to pay for your ads, then get a friendly outside group to support them.

The McCain-Feingold bill says that organizations are free to run ads on genuine issues. That's free speech, and it's protected under the Constitution. But if an outside group runs an ad supporting a specific candidate, then the cost of that ad should be counted as part of the candidate's campaign, and should be subject to the Federal election laws.

The McCain-Feingold bill also increases disclosure requirements for campaigns, so that the public will be able to see much more clearly the sources and the amounts of all contributions that any candidates accept.

It is time for Congress to stop talking about reform and start acting to make it happen. This bill is not a perfect bill. All Senators can find some provision in it that they do not like. But the McCain-Feingold bill is an honest reform and the best hope to end the most flagrant abuses under the current system. I urge Democrats and Republicans alike to support this bill and send it on to President Clinton, so that we can clean up the current mess and restore the voters' shattered confidence in our democracy.

It is time to take our campaigns away from the special interests and give them back to the people. It is time to make our democracy worthy of its name.

Mr. President, I am not sure whether these have been printed in the RECORD so I will ask unanimous consent to print in the RECORD two editorials, one from the Washington Post and one from the New York Times, that comment on our Republican leader's amendments and parliamentary maneuvering so as to require the first and only vote that will be available to the Members of the Senate to occur on his particular gag rule on American workers.

The Washington Post says in the first sentence:

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, having magnanimously allowed campaign finance reform legislation to come to the floor, now proposes to kill it with an amendment affecting the use of labor union dues for political purposes. . . .

Everyone understands what kind of vote this is—a vote not on labor law but on campaign finance at one remove.

They have it right.

And the New York Times points out in its editorial:

Trent Lott, as expected, has come up with a perverse stratagem to kill campaign finance reform this year. . . . Mr. Lott's purpose today is to scuttle the bill by making it unacceptable to Democrats. . . .

[Members] should realize that if they let Mr. Lott kill the bill by subterfuge, their criticism of Democratic excesses will be mere opportunism and hollow rhetoric.

I ask unanimous consent that both of these editorials be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the editorials were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 1, 1997]

LEADER LOTT'S AMENDMENT

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, having magnanimously allowed campaign finance reform legislation to come to the floor, now proposes to kill it with an amendment affecting the use of labor union dues for political purposes. He thinks he can summon the votes for the amendment, after which the theory is that the Democrats, who are the principal beneficiaries of labor support, will do the rest of his work for him by halting the underlying bill. The transparency offers him

the best of both worlds: The bill will be defeated, but he won't have been the one to have done it.

The amendment would require unions to get the written permission of individual members before spending any of their dues for political purposes. The Paycheck Protection Act, its sponsors call it with mock solicitude. "Our political system depends upon one's freedom to participate without even the slightest degree of compulsion," assistant majority leader Don Nickles says. But in fact under labor law such freedom already exists; there is no such compulsion. No worker in this country can be forced to join a union. In some states, workers covered by union contracts who decline to join can be required to pay the equivalent of union dues, but they already have the right, under a 1988 Supreme Court decision, to have the political portion of those dues refunded. The reform bill would codify that decision; the amendment would go beyond it, not necessarily incapacitating the unions but creating an extra hill for them to climb.

Question One is whether Mr. Lott is right in thinking he has the votes. Everyone understands what kind of vote this is—a vote not on labor law but on campaign finance at one remove. A number of Republicans have indicated support for the reform legislation—perhaps enough, assuming all 45 Democrats also vote no, to set the Lott amendment aside. Do they vote with their leader or do they vote for reform?

Question Two is what happens if Mr. Lott prevails. Once again it is a question of senatorial will. Proponents of reform said before the August recess that they were willing to tie up the Senate—prevent it from taking any or most other action—until they got a clear shot at a clean version of the reform bill. You presume they meant not just a chance to talk for a few days, take a test vote on a defective amendment and quit, rather than that they intend to press for a straight up-or-down majority vote on the bill itself. Do they do it at the risk of violating the accommodative code by which the Senate normally lives, or do they cave? What finally matters most to them? That's what the vote on Leader Lott's amendment will begin to tell.

[From the New York Times, Oct. 1, 1997]

TRENT LOTT'S POISON PILL

Trent Lott, as expected, has come up with a perverse stratagem to kill campaign finance reform this year. The Senate majority leader would add a provision to the McCain-Feingold bill requiring unions to get approval from workers before using their dues or fees for political purposes. The idea might deserve consideration another day, but Mr. Lott's purpose today is to scuttle the bill by making it unacceptable to Democrats.

After months of disclosures about excesses in both parties, all 45 Senate Democrats have joined 4 Republicans to support the McCain-Feingold legislation, which would prohibit unlimited donations to the parties by wealthy individuals, labor unions and corporations. These contributions were at the heart of the access-buying scandals of the Clinton campaign, and they figure in the influence of money from tobacco and other industries on Capitol Hill. Mr. Lott knows there are nearly enough senators to approve the bill, so he wants a poison pill to repel Democrats and shatter its bipartisan support.

Only one additional Republican would be needed to join other Republican backers of reform to block Mr. Lott's plan. But it will not be easy for Republicans to resist his seductive amendment. Even two reformers, Senators John McCain of Arizona and Susan

Collins of Maine, support the principle behind the amendment, though they have said they oppose the amendment itself as a threat to reform at this crucial point. Many other Republicans would like to vote for something that would punish labor for its recent campaign spending, particularly the \$35 million that paid for attack ads directed at Republican candidates in 30 Congressional races last year.

The McCain-Feingold bill would codify a nine-year-old ruling of the Supreme Court holding that non-union members who pay union dues or fees as a condition of employment are entitled to demand that the fees not be used for political purposes. If Republicans want to vote on a broader provision giving that right to all union members, they should accept the Democratic offer to consider it on another day without the threat of a filibuster. It would only be fair to consider a similar curb requiring corporations, which outspent unions nearly 9 to 1 on politics last year, to get approval from shareholders when making political expenditures.

If the four Republican supporters of McCain-Feingold stand firm, only one other Republican will be needed to defeat Mr. Lott's disingenuous amendment. Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York, no particular champion of campaign reform in the past, is in for a tough re-election fight next year and has always had the backing of at least some labor unions. Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont, a long-time champion of campaign reform, should see the wisdom of standing up now. Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine, where campaign finance reform has been approved locally, can join with Senator Collins to save the reform legislation.

Other senators who have shown independence on this issue in the past, like John Chafee of Rhode Island, should also come to the rescue. Down the road, still more Republicans will be needed to save the bill, because it will take 60 votes to thwart a promised filibuster. For now, they should realize that if they let Mr. Lott kill the bill by subterfuge, their criticism of Democratic excesses will be mere opportunism and hollow rhetoric.

CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I would like to speak for just a few moments about a very special provision that is now before the Senate, which we will vote on next week, and that is the amendment which has been proposed by Senator MACK, Senator GRAMM, and myself, which is pending on the D.C. appropriations bill. Without this amendment, thousands of Central American refugee families who fled death squads and persecution in their native lands and found safe haven in the United States would be forced to return to their countries. Republican and Democratic administrations alike promised them repeatedly that they will get their day in court to make their claims to remain in the United States.

Last year's immigration law, however, turned its back on that commitment and treated these families unfairly. This legislation reinstates that promise and guarantees these families the day in court they deserve—that's all, just the day in court they deserve to be able to make their case, which they were promised at the time they came to the United States, by Republican and Democratic administrations.