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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

As we watch the movements of Sojourner from Pathfinder on Mars, we exclaim with the Psalmist, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands".—Psalm 8:3-6.

O Yahweh, our Adonai, how excellent is Your name in all the Earth and the farthest reaches of the Earth's universe. You are Sovereign of universes within universes. We praise You that You have enabled us to reach out into space to behold Your majesty and come to grips with the magnitude of the realm of dominion You have entrusted to us. Our eyes have been glued to our television sets to witness the awesome achievement of landing Pathfinder on Mars and we have seen the venture of rover Sojourner on Martian rock after a 309-million-mile, 7-month journey from Earth. Guide our space scientists as they gather information about Mars and we are reminded of the reaches of Your Lordship.

And meanwhile, back to the planet Earth, back to the problems and potentials we face, and back to the U.S. Senate where You empower the leaders of humankind to grapple with the challenges, and grasp the opportunities in our time and in our space. As we work today, remind us that You created Mars and the Earth and will direct us to solutions to the complex problems we face. We bless and praise You for the privilege, Creator, Redeemer, and Lord of Lords. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President. Today following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 936, the defense authorization bill. As previously ordered, from 12:30 until 2:15 p.m., the Senate will stand in recess for the weekly policy luncheons. At 2:15, the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the defense authorization bill. The majority leader is hopeful that cloture can be invoked so that the Senate can complete action on the defense bill this week.

As a reminder, Senators have until 12:30 today to file second-degree amendments on the defense bill. On behalf of the majority leader, I remind all Senators that we are now in a busy legislative period prior to the August recess. The appropriations process has begun and Senators should now expect rollcall votes occurring Monday through Friday of each week. I thank my colleagues for their attention.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, what is the time allocation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time allocation is for not to exceed 5 minutes each. The Senator from Wisconsin does have, under the previous order, 15 minutes.

The Senator from Wisconsin [Mr. FEINGOLD] is recognized.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE NEED FOR CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. FEINGOLD. It was just about 1 year ago, Mr. President, last June, when I stood here on the Senate floor with the senior Senator from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN, and others, and participated in a somewhat abbreviated debate on the need for meaningful, bipartisan campaign reform.

We discussed several issues during that debate, Mr. President. We talked about the 1994 elections and the resulting record amount of campaign spending in that election.

We had a chance to talk briefly about how one candidate for the U.S. Senate had spent \$30 million of his own money to try and win a California Senate seat.

We talked about how the average amount of money spent by a winning 1994 Senate candidate had, unfortunately, reached over \$4.6 million. We talked about the damaging effect that the unabated flow of campaign cash had on our political system as well as on the public perceptions of this institution.

In response to all of that, interestingly, we were told by opponents of reform that all was well, that spiraling campaign spending would somehow strengthen our democracy, and that our system was far from crying out for reform.

And then, on a quiet Tuesday afternoon, after a few paltry hours of debate

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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and absolutely no opportunity for Senators to offer amendments, the bipartisan McCain-Feingold reform bill fell six votes short of breaking a filibuster, and that was done effectively by the guardians of the status quo.

That was a year ago, Mr. President. Although our opponents continue to proclaim that all is well and reform is not a priority, the evidence from the 1996 campaign stands in stark contrast to the declarations of those who are trying to defend the indefensible.

Last year, according to the Washington Post, candidates and parties spent a record amount of money on Federal elections—\$2.7 billion. Mr. President, \$2.7 billion was spent on those elections, which is an all-time record. This record amount of campaign spending, I assume, is exactly what the opponents of reform, including the Speaker of the other body and the junior Senator from Kentucky had really hoped would happen.

Recall Speaker GINGRICH's words from the last Congress:

One of the greatest myths in modern politics is that campaigns are too expensive. The political process, in fact, is not overfunded, but underfunded.

My distinguished colleague from Kentucky, referring to the 1996 election said:

I look on all that election activity as a healthy sign of a vibrant democracy.

Well, Mr. President, back here on planet Earth, and back home in my State of Wisconsin, the American people have a very different view. They are disgusted by our current campaign finance system. They are appalled at the insane amount of money that is being spent on democratic elections. And not surprisingly, they told us how appalled they are by staying home in huge numbers last November. In fact, fewer Americans turned out to vote in 1996 than in any Presidential election year in the last 72 years.

There are mountains of evidence demonstrating the failure of current election laws. Poll after poll demonstrates the mistrust and cynicism the public feels toward this institution as a result of large campaign contributions.

The newspapers and nightly news programs are brimming with reports of election scandals, with charges and countercharges of abuse and illegality filling the headlines every day.

Scores of candidates—including many current officeholders—are choosing not to run for office principally because of the millions of dollars needed for a campaign for the U.S. Senate. In fact, the theory that unlimited campaign spending produces competitive elections has been completely discredited, as the average margin of victory in Senate elections last year was 17 percent.

Let me repeat that, Mr. President. Not only did 95 percent of incumbent Senators win reelection last November, most of these elections weren't even close. On average, 17 percentage points separated the winners from the losers.

Mr. President, while Rome burns and our campaign finance system crumbles all around us, the junior Senator from Kentucky characterizes the chaos of the 1996 elections as a healthy sign of a vibrant democracy.

Mr. President, as the U.S. Senate continues to duck and weave and dodge around the issue of campaign finance reform, the American people are becoming more and more convinced that we here in this body do not have the courage or the will to reform a system that has provided Members of this institution with a consistent reelection rate of well over 90 percent.

As we all know, Mr. President, this week hearings will begin in the Governmental Affairs Committee on the abuses and possible illegalities that occurred in the last election. I can think of no better time for us to make a major step forward to fundamentally overhaul our failed election laws.

Opponents of reform will surely assert that we should wait until the conclusion of these hearings before we consider reform legislation, so we can adequately identify the loopholes and the gaps and holes in our campaign finance system. But, Mr. President, in the last 10 years on this issue alone, we have had 15 reports by 6 different congressional committees, over 1,000 pages of committee reports, 29 sets of hearings, 49 days of testimony, over 6,700 pages of hearings, 522 witnesses, 446 different legislative proposals, more than 3,300 floor speeches, 76 CRS reports, 113 Senate votes, and 17 different filibusters.

So I think it is safe to assume that we have probably reviewed this issue more than almost any other issue pending before this body.

So, Mr. President, it is time now for serious consideration of reform legislation. I have joined with the senior Senator from Arizona, and others, in authoring the only comprehensive, bipartisan plan to be introduced in the Senate this year.

Mr. President, we are very aware that this bill is not perfect. Some have voiced their concerns or objections about this or that provision, or have criticized the legislation for not addressing particular areas. As we have said—and I think as we have shown all along—this legislation is primarily a vehicle for reform, and we are more than willing to consider additions, deletions, or modifications to the package.

We do have some bottom lines, though. First, we should have a full and robust debate on the issue, with all Senators having the opportunity both to debate the many complicated issues involved here and, also, to have the opportunity they didn't have last year to offer amendments.

Second, it is imperative that any legislative vehicle ban on so-called party soft money. These are the monstrous, unlimited and unregulated contributions that have poured in from labor unions, corporations, and wealthy individuals to the political parties.

It is these multihundred-thousand-dollar campaign contributions that were, more than anything else, at the root of the abuses and outrage stemming from the 1996 elections. Individuals and organizations certainly should have the opportunity to contribute to their parties with funds that can be used for Federal elections. But all of those funds, Mr. President, should be raised and spent within the scope and context of Federal election law.

Finally, Mr. President, we must have provisions in this reform legislation that encourage candidates to spend less money on their campaigns and, if we can, to encourage them to raise most of their campaign funds from the people they intend to represent in their district or State.

We have to provide candidates, and particularly challengers who have less access to large financial resources, with the tools and means to effectively convey their message, without having to raise and spend millions of dollars.

Unless we take fundamental steps to change the 90 to 95 percent reelection rates for incumbents that are seemingly enshrined under current election laws, the American people will justifiably perceive such reform as little more than one more incumbent protection plan.

Mr. President, the senior Senator from Arizona and I have waited quite patiently for the opportunity to have this historic debate. It is my hope that we can sit down with the majority leader in the coming days and begin the process of bringing such a meaningful discussion to the Senate floor in the next few weeks.

I look forward to that discussion, and I hope that it will eventually lead to passage of bipartisan reform legislation that will result in what I like to call moderate, mutual disarmament.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

Mr. THOMAS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I think we have 30 minutes set aside.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized. Under a previous order, the majority leader or his designee is to be recognized to speak for 30 minutes.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President.

ORDER FOR CLOTURE VOTE AT 3 P.M.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, may I first, in behalf of the leader, ask unanimous consent that the previously ordered cloture vote now occur at 3 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. For the information of all Senators, the cloture vote earlier scheduled at 2:15 will now occur at 3 p.m.