

the island and condemn the U.S. embargo. Could it be that inadequate funding for drug interdiction is simply the result of Castro's misguided priorities?

In 1982 a federal grand jury indicted four high-ranking Cuba government officials, including a vice admiral of the Cuban navy and a former Cuban ambassador to Colombia. They were charged with facilitating the smuggling of drugs into the United States.

In 1983 then-President Ronald Reagan said that there was "strong evidence" of drug smuggling by high-level Cuban government officials. And in 1989 Castro executed several Ministry of the Interior officials and Cuba's most decorated army officer, Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa, allegedly involved in the drug trade. Castro did so after years of suggesting that U.S. accusations of drug smuggling were lies "concocted by the CIA." He has never explained how widespread Cuba's involvement with narcotrafficking was then or how a military and national hero such as Ochoa, with no oversight over Cuba's harbors or airspace, could have been involved.

Then there is the mystery of how several hundred million dollars appeared in the coffers of Cuba's National Bank. Castro's American supporters assert that \$800 million is sent by the Cuban-American community every year to relatives. However, given the relatively small number of Cuban-American households who still have relatives in Cuba, it is mathematically impossible for that community to generate such funds. The amount is approximately equivalent to the income Cubans derived in 1997-98 from its main export: sugar. Money laundering and drug smuggling are the logical sources of this mysterious income.

It should be noted that, despite major narcotics charges brought against Ochoa and the other Interior Ministry officers, no accounting was ever presented of what should have been multimillion-dollar payoffs.

Claims of Castro's cooperation with U.S. anti-narcotics efforts are a rerun of the Noriega saga. Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega currently is serving a long, federal sentence for his role in the drug trade. He had extensive ties to the Cuban dictator. Evidence was presented at his trial that Castro once mediated a dispute between Noriega and the Medellin drug cartel.

Nevertheless, Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, the Clinton administration's drug czar, recently said that there is "no conclusive evidence to indicate that the Cuban leadership is currently involved in this criminal activity." The general seems to be unaware of a report released by his own office in March, titled "1998 Annual Assessment of Cocaine Movement." It states: "Noncommercial air movements from Colombia to the Bahamas were most prolific in 1998. Most flights fly either east or west of Jamaica, and subsequently fly over Cuban land mass." It adds that the cocaine flown over Cuban territory is dropped "in or near Cuban territorial waters."

Given Castro's sensitivity concerning unidentified aircraft flying over Cuba, as evidenced by the Brothers to the Rescue shootdown, it is inexplicable that not one drug-smuggling airplane has ever been shot down over the island.

There are those who believe that the Cuban leopard has changed his spots. Maybe. But the consequences of taking Castro at his word can be tragic. The impact of the drug epidemic on America's youth is far too important to allow the facts linking Castro to the drug trade to be swept under the rug.

BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 417) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to reform the financing of campaigns for elections for Federal office, and for other purposes:

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Shays-Meehan Campaign Finance Reform Act and urge my colleagues to vote against all "poison pill" amendments that will be offered today. I am proud to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation, which represents the best, real opportunity to reform our broken campaign finance system.

The issue of campaign finance reform cuts to the essence of democracy. Our unique American political system will not survive without the participation of the average American citizen. Unfortunately, more and more Americans are dropping out—with each election, fewer Americans are voting. They are doing so because they no longer believe that their vote matters. As they see more and more money pouring into campaigns, they believe that their voice is being drowned out by wealthy special interests.

Despite the cynicism of the American public, Congress has failed to enact significant campaign finance reform legislation since 1974. In that year, in the wake of the Watergate Scandal, Congress imposed tough spending limits on direct, "hard money" contributions to candidates. Unfortunately, no one at that time foresaw how two loopholes in the law would lead to a gross corruption of our political system.

The first loophole is "soft" money—the unregulated and unlimited contributions to the political parties from corporations, labor unions, or wealthy individuals. "Soft" money allows wealthy special interests to skirt around "hard" money limits and dump unlimited sums of money into a campaign.

During the 1996 election cycle, approximately 30 percent of all large federal contributions came in the form of soft money to political parties. Both parties raised soft money at a 75 percent higher rate than four years ago. For the 2000 elections, it is estimated that soft money spending will exceed \$500 million—more than double the total for the 1996 elections.

Soft money is used to finance the second loophole in campaign finance law: sham issue advertisements. This loophole allows special interests to spend huge sums of money on campaign ads advocating either the defeat or election of a candidate. As long as these ads do not use the magic words "vote for" or "vote against" they are deemed "issue advocacy" under current law and therefore not subject to campaign spending limits or disclosure requirements.

During the 1996 elections, the television and radio airwaves were flooded with these sham issue ads—many of which were negative attack ads. Americans who see or here these ads have no idea who pays for them because

no disclosure is required. They drown out the voice of the average American citizen, and even sometimes of the candidates themselves. Without reform, we can certain expect a huge increase in these sham issue ads.

The Shays-Meehan bill begins to restore public confidence in our electoral system by closing these two egregious loopholes. The bill bans all contributions of soft money to federal campaigns. Specifically, it bans national party committees from soliciting, receiving, directing or spending soft money. The bill also prohibits state and local parties from spending soft money on federal election activity.

In an effort to ban campaign advertisements that masquerade as "issue advocacy," Shays-Meehan tightens the definition of "express advocacy" communications. Under the bill, any ad that is clearly designed to influence an election is deemed "express advocacy" and must therefore abide by federal contribution and expenditure limits and disclosure requirements. Shays-Meehan includes well crafted language that specifically exempts legitimate voter guides from the definition of "express advocacy."

The Shays-Meehan bill would not prevent public organizations from running advertisements, but it would ensure that ads clearly designed to influence an election are regulated under federal law. We have laws clearly designed to regulate and disclose campaign donations and expenditures, and no one should be allowed to evade them. Shays-Meehan would ensure that everyone involved in influencing elections plays by the same rules.

Opponents have argued that the Shays-Meehan bill undermines the First Amendment right of free speech. However, the Supreme Court has ruled that Congress has a broad ability to protect the political process from corruption and the appearance of corruption. It has upheld as constitutional the ability to limit contributions by individuals and political committees to candidates. The Supreme Court has also clearly permitted Congress to distinguish between issue advocacy on the one hand, and electioneering or "express advocacy" on the other.

The Meehan-Shays proposal will not cure our campaign finance system of all its evils—and I certainly support more far reaching restrictions on campaign contributions and expenditures. However, the bill will take a modest but significant first step toward restoring integrity in our political system. It will limit the influence of wealthy special interests and help to restore the voice of average American citizens in our political process. In short, enactment of this legislation is essential to the survival of American democracy.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT ON H.R. 2756, "FAIR COMPETITION IN TAX-EXEMPT FINANCING ACT OF 1999"

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in August I introduced H.R. 2756, the "Fair Competition in Tax-Exempt Financing Act of 1999", which has been referred to the Ways and Means Committee. As a general proposition I believe

that governments should be cautious in their use of tax-exempt financing, particularly when it is used to provide services that can be obtained through the private sector.

Since I introduced the bill, I have learned that it may raise significant issues that could affect the tax-exempt bonds of municipal electric systems. It was certainly not my intent to do anything that would affect the ongoing debate on the private use restrictions on these tax-exempt bonds.

As the Ranking Minority Member of the Energy and Power Subcommittee of the Commerce Committee, which has electric restructuring legislation pending before it, I believe it is prudent that I remain neutral on this issue. In fact I have encouraged the investor-owned utilities and public power systems to reach an agreement on private use and offer it to the Congress as a solution to this important restructuring issue.

Mr. Speaker, in order to make my intentions completely clear, were I permitted to withdraw the bill, I would do so. However, the custom in the House is not to permit bills to be withdrawn. As a result of the information I have received and the concerns that have been expressed since the introduction of the bill, I have decided not to seek further action on this legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARILYN PRICE BIRNHAK AND J. ROBERT BIRNHAK ON 35 YEARS OF SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP TO THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. J. Robert Birnhak for being honored at the 35th anniversary celebration of Weight Watchers of Philadelphia on Saturday, September 18, 1999. Marilyn Price Birnhak along with the support of her husband J. Robert Birnhak founded Weight Watchers of Philadelphia thirty-five years ago. As founder and first president, she watched her group of eight members grow to roughly 20,000 members over the years, meeting in towns throughout the southeastern Pennsylvania and southwestern New Jersey areas.

Mr. and Mrs. Birnhak have also instilled in their children a sense of leadership, as their son John currently serves as the company's vice president of finance and their daughter Tracey is vice president of marketing and business development. All of their children are active in their communities.

The Birnhak family has contributed to Weight Watchers' tremendous growth in the Philadelphia area, as well as in the broader reaches of the franchise. Mr. Birnhak served as a past president of the Weight Watchers Franchise Association, and Mrs. Birnhak served first as vice president and then as president of the association.

In addition to their commitment to Weight Watchers, the Birnhaks have been leaders in the larger community as well. Mr. Birnhak has been active on the board of the Philadelphia Geriatric Center and Congregation Beth Sho-

lom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Both he and Mrs. Birnhak have been honored by the State of Israel Bonds, Jewish Theological Seminary and Ben Gurion University in Israel. Mrs. Birnhak is also on the board of directors of the Philadelphia Theatre Company.

Mrs. Birnhak has contributed significantly to numerous health panels, seminars and health fairs. She has lectured at medical colleges and universities and appeared on radio and television talk shows.

Through Weight Watchers the Birnhaks have participated in a myriad of charitable endeavors for the United Way, the American Heart Association, the March of Dimes, the Alzheimer's Association, the Hero Scholarship Fund, Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, Inc. Feeds the Hungry, the Kidney Foundation, among others. In particular, Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, Inc. is to be commended for being the single largest contributor to the Philadelphia Hero Scholarship Fund.

Once again, my congratulations to a wonderful couple and their family.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RICK LAZIO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, because I was unavoidably detained, I was absent for the vote on the Bereuter/Wicker amendment to H.R. 417. This amendment would prohibit campaign contributions to federal candidates from any individual other than a U.S. citizen or national. Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of the Bereuter amendment in part because it would have been consistent with my record. On July 14, 1998, I voted for a similar amendment offered by Representative VITO FOSSELLA (vote #276 of the Second Session of the 105th Congress) during last year's debate on campaign finance reform.

THOMAS PUGH HONORED

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a noted community leader, Mr. Thomas E. Pugh, as he is honored by the Ethics Institute of Northeastern Pennsylvania at their annual dinner. I am pleased to have been asked to join in this event.

A former CEO of the John Heinz Institute of Rehabilitation in Wilkes-Barre, Tom Pugh now works at Allied Services in Scranton. He began there as director of communications and served later as vice president of corporate services better assuming his current role as vice-president of rehabilitation.

Tom is a dedicated professional who is active on both the local and international scene. Since 1994, Tom has worked with the Litewska Children's Hospital in Warsaw, Poland as a consultant on hospital privatization and foundation formation. He conducts a corporate program that provides equipment to the Association of Disabled People of Lithuania. Tom also serves as a consultant to Trnava

University Healthcare Management Education Project in the Slovakia Republic. Locally, Tom is active in the Arthritis Foundation, the James S. Brady Center, the Northeast Region Board of the Health Education Center, and the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute. He serves as Executive Vice-President of the Board of Pennsylvania Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Mr. Speaker, Tom Pugh is a dedicated professional and community leader. His commitment to improving the lives of the disabled both here and abroad is well known. The Ethics Institute of Northeastern Pennsylvania, which was established to increase the understanding of contemporary ethical issues in business, government, politics, health care and social issues, is wise to fete him. I send my sincere best wishes to Tom as he accepts this prestigious award.

TRIBUTE TO THE LUTKE FAMILY

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Lutke family of Marion, Michigan, whose farm was recently designated a Centennial Farm by Secretary of State Candice Miller and the Michigan Historical Commission.

This honor is bestowed on farms that have remained in the same family for 100 years or more. The Lutke farm was established in 1873. Today Harvey and Ruth Lutke harvest 280 acres of hay and corn.

The Centennial Farm designation recognizes the rich agricultural heritage of our great state. It pays tribute to the generations of families who have fed the world and passed on their legacy of hard work and determination to their children.

The Lutke family's success is a source of pride to Missaukee County, to Michigan, and our nation. I am pleased to have the opportunity to honor them today in the U.S. House of Representatives and I wish them many more generations of bounty.

GROWING DIGITAL DIVIDE

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to draw attention to our nation's growing digital divide. The nation's economy is surging to unprecedented levels. The productivity of small business start-ups, driven by technology and American ingenuity, is bursting with entrepreneurial capital and the creation of unparalleled wealth.

Yet amidst the euphoria, there is growing concern about the alarming trend of limited access to the benefits of this "digit" economy.

In its July report, "Falling Through The Net," the Department of Commerce confirmed these fears about the information "haves" and "have nots" citing a persisting "digital divide" between the information rich and the information poor. A divide characterized by a disparity of race, gender, wealth and geography that grows disturbingly further apart.