

House of Representatives from voting on Shays-Meehan. This is a disingenuous way to conduct the debate. We need to see through it today.

This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue; this is an American issue. Senator MCCAIN is leading the fight in the Senate. We need to come together as Democrats and Republicans today. We need to have an open and honest debate on campaign finance reform and defeat the poison pill amendments that will be offered on the bill.

TAXES TODAY ARE SIMPLY TOO HIGH

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, taxes today are simply too high. The average American pays \$10,300 every year in taxes to all levels of government. That is more than the cost of food, shelter, and clothing combined. Yet President Clinton continues to reject tax relief for hard-working Americans.

If one is married and paying more in taxes than one should because of the IRS marriage penalty, the President says, tough. If one works hard all of their life to build a business so that one can pass it on to their kids only to fall victim to the death tax, he says, that is too bad.

Along with across-the-board tax cuts for all taxpayers, the Republican Congress wants to provide badly needed relief from the marriage penalty and do away with the death tax. But the President says he will veto that.

Rather than allow taxpayers to keep more of what they earn, he wants them to give more to Washington bureaucrats. By vowing to veto tax cuts, President Clinton is no longer rejecting badly needed tax relief, he is working his back on the hard-working American families.

A VOTE FOR SHAYS-MEEHAN IS A VOTE FOR A STRONGER DEMOCRACY

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, when the founders created our democracy, they did not foresee soft money. They did not anticipate PACs, they did not know phrases like "lobbyists," "fund raiser" and "issue ad." They did not know they would become part of our political vocabulary. But what our forefathers did know was that the strength of our democracy would rest upon the courage of its inheritors. Today that courage is being tested. Mr. Speaker, today we are looking for men and women of mettle to pass meaningful campaign finance reform.

Campaign finance reform presents a very clear choice. Those who vote in

favor of Shays-Meehan, which passed this body by a wide margin last year, vote to eliminate soft money from our campaigns. Those who obstruct campaign finance reform and try to attach their poison pills turn their backs on the American people's desire for a political system that is built vote by vote and not dollar by dollar.

This is a bipartisan problem, and it needs a bipartisan solution. Let us make our founders proud; let us support and pass Meehan-Shays, remove soft money from our campaigns, and strengthen our democracy for future generations.

MANAGED CARE REFORM

(Mr. GANSKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I want to clear up an area of misunderstanding that some of my colleagues have, as well as some of the business community has concerning the bipartisan managed care bill.

I recently had a CEO of a major corporation from the Midwest and his lobbyist come into my office and say, if that bill comes law, it would mean the end of ERISA. I said, how so? He said, we would not be able to do a uniform benefits package for our employees across various State lines. I said, you know what? There is nothing in that bill that deals with mandated benefits. Nothing, nada, zero. There would still be ERISA if we passed this law.

Businesses that operate across State lines would still be able to do a uniform benefits package, and they would still be exempt from State mandates. The only thing this bill does in ERISA that is of consequence is that it says that if a health plan makes a medical decision that results in the injury to one of their subscribers that they are responsible for that, just like any insurer in the individual market today already is.

REAL REFORM VERSUS SHOW ME THE MONEY

(Mr. CROWLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, nine out of 10 Americans support campaign finance reform; nine out of 10.

The simple fact is that the cost of running for federal office today is so great that candidates are forced to devote far too much time and effort to fund-raising, rather than dealing with the issues of importance to their constituents. We can eliminate soft money entirely, rid our society of the pollution caused by sham issue ads, and increase public disclosure of who is paying for what. It is real reform versus show me the money.

This is the crux of the argument today as the House will undertake the serious debate of reforming our system

of financing political campaigns. The Shays-Meehan bill is real reform, eliminates soft money, increases disclosure and bans phoney issue ads.

The Republican leadership support the show-me-the-money approach. They argue for more money in the system and less reforms. Real reform versus show me the money. Support Shays-Meehan and show every American that the House supports real reform and not simply more money.

KUDOS TO SPEAKER HASTERT FOR BRINGING SHAYS-MEEHAN TO THE FLOOR

(Mr. CAMPBELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Speaker of the House. There are many who said that this day would never come when we would get to vote on Shays-Meehan. But today, we will get to vote on real campaign finance reform. I was a fighter on the floor here last year for Shays-Meehan, and I will be that again today.

Let us give the Speaker of the House some credit. Remember, under the previous Speaker, we had to have a discharge petition to get this to the floor. This Speaker, by contrast, promised we would have a vote in September. He has kept that promise. And that is why we are here today.

One brief comment further on the merits. I only wish we could do more than Shays-Meehan. But what Shays-Meehan does that is so valuable is to plug two huge loopholes, one might even call them subterfuge, in existing law. The law says, an individual cannot give above \$1,000 to a campaign. But the law allows you to give all you have to a political party for soft money, and then the party takes the money and spends it so as to help a candidate. You would not know the difference between the kind of ads they run, and a candidate's own ads.

The other loophole concerns ads that are supposedly on public issues, but turn out to be nothing but campaign ads. They escape the law because they do not use the magic words, "vote for" or "vote against."

That is what Shays-Meehan does, it plugs two loopholes. I wish we could do more, but it is a great start; and I conclude by complimenting Speaker HASTERT once again for keeping his word and giving us the chance to vote on this today.

A UNITED FRONT BRINGS REFORM

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, like the previous speaker, I too want to compliment the Speaker for giving us this opportunity to debate what I feel is the most important issue that we are going

to bring up in this session of Congress, and that is the debate and the votes on meaningful campaign finance reform in order to return some credibility to our political process.

When I was first elected in 1996, the shortcomings of our current system became obvious to me. The tidal wave of money washing around during an election does not elevate political discord and contribute to the debate of ideas. It simply drowns out the voices of those who cannot afford to buy into the process. The big soft money contributions contribute to the perception that special interests have too much influence in the political process. And that perception is correct.

So here we are once again, attempting to right the wrongs of our current system. Drawing from the lessons from the previous session of Congress, the best chance we have for reform is represented by the Shays-Meehan bill. With a united front in the House, we can send a clear message to the Senate today that the time for reform is now.

The citizens of western Wisconsin have told me that our democracy belongs to the people, not to the large money special interests. They do not expect us to take no for an answer on this important issue of reforming the political process. I encourage my colleagues to support Shays-Meehan today and to oppose the "poison-pill" amendments and substitutes.

TIME FOR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

(Mr. ROYCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, in the last Congress, this body at the urging of the administration approved \$18 billion in new payments to the International Monetary Fund. At that time, some of us called for reforms to this flawed institution, reforms that would have required real transparency and would have provided greater accountability for the IMF. But at that time, the administration's position was that it was not the time to institute reforms, that it was critical to send the money first, they said, reform it later.

So that is what Congress did, not with my vote; but that is what Congress did. Congress sent a check for \$18 billion, only to find out last month that billions of dollars in IMF loans to Russia, the fund's largest borrower over the last 7 years, likely was diverted and laundered through U.S. and other Western banks.

The IMF states that they have no evidence that their money is involved and that they are investigating. Well, it is time that this Congress conducts its own investigation and holds the IMF accountable. Its largest donors, the U.S. taxpayers, deserve no less.

EAST TIMOR CRISIS

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, it is Rwanda all over again. Thousands of people are being murdered in East Timor while the international community dawdles. I applaud the Australian government for volunteering its forces to peacekeeping efforts long before our own country recognized the need for action.

In a brutal takeover of East Timor over 20 years ago sanctioned by the United States, the people of East Timor have been subjected to an ethnic cleansing of one-third of the entire indigenous population. All the while the U.S. and Australian Armed Forces provided training to the very units that are on the rampage right now. Yet again, the U.S. Government has blood on its hands.

We apologize for Rwanda after letting 1 million innocents die. We apologize for Guatemala after condoning the brutal murders of even U.S. citizens. When will we apologize for East Timor, when it is too late?

Mr. Speaker, the time to act is now. The administration should stop dawdling and start packing to save the lives of the innocent East Timor people. What is taking this administration so long to get it right?

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of meaningful campaign finance reform and passage of the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill. This Congress must act to restore public confidence and participation in our electoral system.

Today the House finally takes up this important debate. I urge my colleagues to support Shays-Meehan in its current form. The American public deserves a debate on meaningful reform, not a weak substitute disguised as reform. If we are to maintain public trust in our political process, we have a duty and an obligation to address this issue.

Let us ban soft money and stop the attack ads disguised as issue advocacy soft money pays for. Let us strengthen the Federal Election Commission and give it the teeth it needs to enforce campaign finance laws.

The American people are tired of politicians who talk about reform but do nothing to enact it. Let us show our constituents that this time we mean it. Let us pass this important piece of legislation.

AMENDMENTS AND SUBSTITUTES TO THE SHAYS-MEEHAN BILL WOULD WEAKEN CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, almost every year since I have been in the House we have struggled to try to pass meaningful campaign finance reform, and this year is no different.

Ten poison pill amendments and substitutes have been introduced that are designed to weaken the Shays-Meehan bill. This bill is necessary to cut off the flow of unlimited and often undisclosed money into the Federal election system.

Specifically, the bill closes two primary loopholes through which this money flows into Federal campaigns, soft money and sham issue ads. All of us have received letters and phone calls from constituents who care about this issue and want this system cleaned up.

One of my constituents stated that as long as the fox has full access to the henhouse, he has no plans to repair the hole. So it goes with politicians, he said. He believes the only way campaign finance reform would happen would be to take it out of our hands.

Let us prove him wrong. Congress needs to close these loopholes now to stop the corruption of elections into the 21st century and to restore Americans' faith in their government. Vote yes on Shays-Meehan and no on the poison pill amendments.

TIME TO PASS THE SHAYS-MEEHAN BILL

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Shays-Meehan. This is one of the most important bills that this House will consider and I hope pass. The Nation is watching today. Individuals as well as the faith community, the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, and a host of others in my district and nationwide are committed to good, honest government, government where ordinary citizens could have a chance, through their participation in the political process, to have a voice and not be drowned out by the millions of dollars now available for only the rich.

We have had laws since 1907 and 1947 that forbid soft money from flowing into campaigns. However, the loopholes have been great and we need to close them. The Shays-Meehan bill closes the loopholes by blocking the present flow of unlimited soft money and unregulated contributions to the political parties. Shays-Meehan, our bipartisan bill, also blocks last-minute campaign ads that masquerade as issue ads.

The Nation is watching. Our constituents are watching. It is time to pass the Shays-Meehan bill.