

tax policy that took place before Bush. The result is that from 1992 to 2007, the latest statistics that we have, the effective Federal tax rate—effective Federal tax rate, and that is what people really pay—for the top 400 income earners in our country was cut almost in half. The rich get richer, their effective tax rates are cut almost in half.

Today, we have a Federal Tax Code that is so unfair, that it is so absurd that Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest people in the world, often points out that he pays a lower effective tax rate than does his secretary. Hedge fund managers who make \$1 billion a year now pay a lower effective tax rate than many teachers, nurses, firefighters, and police officers.

I should also add that in terms of wealth, as opposed to just income, inequality, of course, is also growing. Today, the top 1 percent owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent, and during the Bush years, the wealthiest 400 Americans saw their wealth increase by some \$400 billion. When a few people have incredible wealth and incredible income, they do not tuck that money under the mattress; they use that money.

The point Senator MURRAY of Washington was making a few moments ago on the DISCLOSE Act is a very good example of how some of those folks are making money. Not content to have the top 1 percent earning more than 23 percent of all income in America, these folks want more. Their greed has no end. And what they are now doing as a result of the DISCLOSE Act, a 5-to-4 Supreme Court decision, they and their corporate friends are now free to put as much money as they want into the political process, into television ads, into radio ads, and they do not have to disclose who they are. So you are going to have corporations with foreign interests getting involved with the American political process. You are going to have corporations putting all kinds of money into the political process, setting up phony institutions and front groups, and they do not have to tell the American people who they are.

In addition to the DISCLOSE Act and the huge amount of money now flooding into the political process, we have an enormous amount of lobbying and campaign contributions that are going right into the whole tax issue, that which we are debating now.

As you know, some of our Republican friends think, apparently, that the top 1 percent earning more income than the bottom 50 percent is not quite enough, that the fact that we have given huge tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires for the last 15 years is not enough; they need more. So what some of our Republican friends are doing and what their friends on Wall Street and big money interests are doing is pouring huge amounts of money into the political process which says that we should provide, over a 10-year period, \$700 billion in tax breaks to the top 2 percent; that millionaires,

those people making \$1 million or more, should receive on average a \$100,000 tax break. And they are fighting for tax breaks for the rich at the same time as they are saying: Oh, isn't it terrible that we have a \$13 trillion national debt. So they wanted to give \$700 billion in tax breaks to the top 2 percent, and then they say: Oh my goodness, isn't it awful that we have a recordbreaking deficit and a large national debt, and they want to pass on those tax breaks to our kids and grandchildren—increase the national debt so that we can give tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires. That makes zero sense to me. I think that is an incredibly dumb and irresponsible idea.

What I think we should do, what I believe we should do is that half of that \$700 billion, instead of being given in tax breaks to the top 2 percent, should be used for deficit reduction. Let's do it now. And the other \$350 billion should be invested in our infrastructure—rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our water systems, our schools, our transportation systems—and putting people back to work. Our infrastructure is crumbling. Everybody knows that. We are going to have to address it now or later. Let's address it now. In the middle of a recession, let's put millions of people back to work rebuilding America to make us more competitive in the global economy and make our economic system more efficient. I think, frankly, it makes a heck of a lot more sense to put millions of people to work rebuilding America's infrastructure and using \$350 billion to lower the deficit than it does to give \$700 billion in tax breaks to the top 2 percent. I hope that a majority of my colleagues or, in fact, 60 of my colleagues agree with that because, to me, that is the policy this country desperately needs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH.) The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

THE DISCLOSE ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to take a few minutes to talk about this issue of campaign ads being run all across the land and millions of dollars being spent by groups with misleading names, leaving our voters without any knowledge of who is behind the ads they are hearing.

To me, the lack of accountability and civility and literal accuracy in political campaigns is absolutely unacceptable, and I am of the view that we ought to be asking here in the Senate whether this is really the best we can do to ensure accountability and openness in American politics. I think the answer to that is, it is a no-brainer. There ought to be basic disclosure of who is behind all of those ads that are flooding the airwaves. That is what is behind the DISCLOSE legislation, the bill that has been brought before the Senate to ensure that it is possible for Americans, at a time when there is in-

tense interest in American politics, to know who is sponsoring all of these commercials that are rushing at the American people pell-mell over the airwaves.

What is striking is how stark the inequities in all of this are. What I am particularly troubled about is that as a result of the Supreme Court decision, it is possible today for a foreign interest with no vote here in the United States to have a more substantial voice in our elections this fall than any hard-working American taxpayer. When you break that down, you really get a sense of just how outlandish this Supreme Court decision is. Let me repeat that. Foreign interests, through a subsidiary, with no vote here in the United States, will have a louder voice in the State of Alaska, in the State of Oregon, than any of the hard-working taxpayers whom we are honored to represent here in the Senate. I think that indicates that the campaign finance system is way out of whack.

This Supreme Court decision, in my view, has literally blown the hinges off the doors of our democracy. What is needed is legislation such as the DISCLOSE Act to ensure accountability, civility, and accuracy in political campaigns.

My view is that the lack of that kind of accountability creates not only confusion but even resentment among voters. The reason I know that is that the situation the country finds itself in now is very similar to what I saw when I first ran for the Senate in 1996 against the man who eventually became my colleague and good friend in the Senate, Gordon Smith. That was the only race in the United States at that time, the winter of 1996. Attack ads were being run by all sides, left and right. Senator Smith and I literally had no idea who was behind a lot of the attack ads. We made the judgment that while policy differences and personal criticisms are certainly a fair and legitimate part of a political campaign, what is not acceptable is the situation our country finds itself in, once again; that is, the huge numbers of ads being run where nobody could figure out who was behind some of the attacks, attacks that were pretty vicious and certainly high decibel.

So I came to the Senate in the winter of 1996, and I vowed to try to make some changes. I vowed to work with colleagues of both parties to bring transparency and accountability to campaign advertising. I had the good fortune to find a terrific partner in this effort with our colleague from Maine, Senator SUSAN COLLINS. As part of the McCain-Feingold bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, Senator COLLINS and I were able to win passage of an amendment which has come to be known as the stand by your ad disclosure requirement. Not only have we all seen these ads, everyone who has run to serve in this distinguished Chamber has recorded them. It is real simple. I am MARK BEGICH. I approved this message. I am RON WYDEN, and I approved

this message. It is not a hard thing to do. It comes about as a result of the fact that a colleague on the other side of the aisle, Senator COLLINS, joined me in this effort that I believed passionately in after that Senate special election in the winter of 1996.

That simple disclosure requirement gives voters very important information about who is behind a political ad. I am of the view that disclosure should not be required just for candidates but for anyone—interest groups, corporations—who seeks to communicate a political message. Unfortunately, after the Citizens United ruling, there are a variety of these interests that are now free to spend unlimited amounts of money on political ads without voters knowing who is paying for the ads. That is dangerous for democracy. It is wrong, and it needs to be stopped.

The stand by your ad provision of the DISCLOSE Act would require the top official, the CEO or a top official from a company, a union or any organization paying for a political advertisement to take responsibility for the ad. The DISCLOSE Act can't prevent the formation of misleading front organizations, but another provision would require disclosure of the top five funders to allow voters to know who is behind the ad.

I am of the view that companies, unions, other organizations ought to be held to the same standards of transparency and accountability in their political advertising as political candidates and political action committees. It is, in a one-sentence description, all about sunshine. Sunshine is the best disinfectant. The disclosure requirements in this legislation are going to give voters more information and help them understand who is paying for these political ads.

I continue, as the Presiding Officer knows, to do everything I can to work in the Senate in a bipartisan fashion. I am pleased to see my distinguished colleague in the chair. He has joined me with Senator GREGG and a number of colleagues on both sides of the aisle in what is the first bipartisan tax reform legislation in a quarter century. It picks up on another bipartisan model—legislation advanced by former President Reagan, Bill Bradley, Dan Rostenkowski, and others. A big day is coming up in tax reform. That is tomorrow. Chairman BAUCUS is going to lead us into the first debate in a long time about tax reform. I very much look forward to working with Chairman BAUCUS and his leadership on this issue.

I see my colleague from the Finance Committee, Senator GRASSLEY. If we are going to duplicate that important tax reform work of 1986, it is going to be Chairman BAUCUS, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator HATCH, the leaders of our committee taking us forward in a bipartisan way so the distinguished Senator from Alaska and I and other more junior members can work with our colleagues and make some history and fix the American tax system, radically

simplify it. But to do that we will have to work in a bipartisan way.

I come to the floor to say, once again, I am hopeful that the DISCLOSE legislation, which provides an opportunity for transparency and accountability in campaign finance, can also become a bipartisan cause. There is absolutely nothing partisan about the question of making sure a political advertisement that is offered is one where the American people know who is behind it. That is not a partisan issue. As my friend from Alaska knows, it certainly isn't a partisan issue to take this unbelievable mess of a Tax Code that runs page after page after page, thousands of words, and simplify it to a one-page form, a one-page 1040 form. That is not partisan work, nor should disclosing campaign finance advertisements be partisan either.

I ask on this question of election reform, look at the present system, where there is no accountability, where people don't know who is behind these advertisements, and ask: Is this the best we can do? I think the answer is obviously no. I think the answer is, instead, to say that companies and unions and other organizations ought to be held to the same standard of honesty and integrity as political candidates are required to do under the legislation Senator COLLINS and I authored as part of McCain-Feingold.

The fact is, this Senate can do better in election reform. I urge colleagues to work together to bring transparency and accountability to American elections and pass the DISCLOSE Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

K2 PRODUCTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as a parent and grandparent, I have long been concerned about the dangers that face our kids. I have been especially concerned about the large amount of dangerous drugs in this country and their use by anybody but particularly young people. It is clear drug dealers will stop at nothing to get our kids hooked on drugs. All too often, we learn of new and emerging threats to communities that often have negative impacts on our youth. But when these drug threats emerge, it is crucial that we unite to halt the spread of the problem before it consumes families and communities.

Today we are confronted with new and very dangerous substances packaged as somewhat innocent products. Specifically, young people are able to go online and/or to the nearest shopping mall and purchase incense laced with chemicals that alter mind and body. These products are commonly referred to as "K2" or "Spice," among other names. I have a chart Members can see behind me. They can see the package varieties of K2 products. I will not go into detail, but look at them.

Specifically, kids are able to actually purchase these products with a great

amount of ease. Kids and drug users are smoking this product in order to obtain what they think is a legal high, and the word "legal" tends to imply harmless. It is believed K2 products emerged on the scene beginning 4 or 5 years ago. Their use spread quickly through Europe and the United States. According to a study conducted by the European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, most of the chemicals found in K2 products are not even reported on the label. This study by the European Centre concluded that these chemicals are not listed because there is a deliberate marketing strategy to represent this product as somewhat a natural substance. However, K2 is anything but natural. Most of the chemicals the Drug Enforcement Administration has identified within K2 products were invented by Dr. John W. Huffman of Clemson University and for a very worthwhile purpose—research purposes.

These synthetic chemicals were never intended to be used for any other purpose other than research. They were never tested on humans, and no long-term effects of their use are currently known. As more and more people are experimenting with K2, it is becoming increasingly evident that K2 use is anything but safe.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers reports significant increases in the amount of calls concerning these products. There were only 13 calls related to K2 use reported in 2009. Look at the figure for 2010. There have been over 1,000 calls concerning K2 use. So it is very evident: A dramatic increase in a short amount of time of the public concerned about K2 use, probably reflecting increased use of K2.

Common effects reported by emergency room doctors include increased agitation, elevated heart rate and blood pressure, hallucinations, and seizures. The effects from the highs from K2 use are reported to last several hours, and in some cases up to one week.

Dr. Huffman has stated that since so little research has been conducted on K2 chemicals, using any one of them would be like "playing Russian roulette."

In fact, Dr. Anthony Scalzo, a professor of emergency medicine at St. Louis University, reports that these chemicals are significantly more potent than even marijuana. Dr. Scalzo states that the amount of chemicals in K2 varies from product to product, so naturally no one can be sure exactly the amount of drugs you are putting into your body when you use these K2 products. Dr. Scalzo reports that this can lead to significant problems such as altering the state of mind, addiction, injury, and even death. I will refer to the death issue in a moment.

According to various news articles across the Nation, K2 can cause serious erratic and criminal behavior. In Mooresville, IN, the police arrested a