

Getting the tribal language in here, I think, is not only a good bipartisan effort, but one that the administration is supporting, as well working directly with Director Fugate. I was glad to see the administration put out an email on the tribal language just a little while ago.

Let me respond to the concern that this bill may not allow FEMA to respond to a terrorist attack. It's just not true.

First, the President used the Stafford Act and FEMA to declare a Federal disaster and to respond to every major terrorist attack in this country. There's no question FEMA, the Stafford Act, or this bill fully authorizes the President to direct any element of the Federal Government to respond to a terrorist attack.

Second, one of the most important reforms made by this bill is to remove the liability cloud hanging over our urban search and rescue teams when they're called into Federal service to respond to a disaster.

On September 11, these teams responded to the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. They responded to Hurricane Katrina and even the earthquake in Haiti. Many of these brave first responders are licensed medical professionals or engineers who knowingly put themselves at risk when they are federalized and sent to other States.

The urban search and rescue teams have waited 10 years to remove this cloud over their heads. This bill finally fixes that problem. That's why this bill is supported by the urban search and rescue teams, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Association of Counties, the National Emergency Management Association, and the International Association of Emergency Managers.

They also support this bill and support our first responders. Vote for this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. DENHAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2903, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROHIBITING USE OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN FUNDS FOR PARTY CONVENTIONS

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5912) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to prohibit the use of public funds for political party conventions, and to provide for the return of previously distributed funds for deficit reduction, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5912

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PROHIBITING USE OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN FUNDS FOR PARTY CONVENTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 95 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking section 9008.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections of chapter 95 of such Code is amended by striking the item relating to section 9008.

SEC. 2. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) AVAILABILITY OF PAYMENTS TO CANDIDATES.—The third sentence of section 9006(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking “, section 9008(b)(3),”.

(b) REPORTS BY FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION.—Section 9009(a) of such Code is amended—

(1) by adding “and” at the end of paragraph (2);

(2) by striking the semicolon at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting a period; and

(3) by striking paragraphs (4), (5), and (6).

(c) PENALTIES.—Section 9012 of such Code is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking the second sentence; and

(2) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (2) and redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (2).

(d) AVAILABILITY OF PAYMENTS FROM PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY MATCHING PAYMENT ACCOUNT.—The second sentence of section 9037(a) of such Code is amended by striking “and for payments under section 9008(b)(3)”.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this Act shall apply with respect to elections occurring after December 31, 2012.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to prohibit the use of public funds for political party conventions.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5912, which would terminate taxpayer financing of party conventions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to say that party conventions today are by and large week-long televised movie sets and almost entirely symbolic. Although conventions do provide important insight into party platforms and Presidential candidates, spending millions of taxpayer dollars to fund them, particularly in today's environment, is simply untenable.

American taxpayers should not be subsidizing political party conventions. With our historic levels of deficit spending and our national debt over \$16 trillion and climbing, this Congress and this President need to be thinking very differently about how we use taxpayer dollars.

□ 1740

Since 1976, approximately \$1.5 billion has been spent on publicly funding our Presidential primaries, our Presidential general elections, and our Presidential party conventions. Each party's national convention this year received almost \$18 million in taxpayer funding. While I believe we should be getting rid of public funding of Presidential campaigns as well, at a minimum we should pass this common-sense measure to stop financing our parties with taxpayers' dollars. The American taxpayer has paid enough for this unwise experiment. It should be ended.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, introduced by my colleague from Oklahoma, I would hope would garner overwhelming bipartisan support. I thank him for introducing it and for his commitment to a responsible and efficient stewardship of taxpayer dollars. This should stop funding going to all party conventions. It is a bipartisan solution to a bipartisan problem.

I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 5912, Mr. Speaker, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FUDGE. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in opposition to H.R. 5912. H.R. 5912 terminates the public financing of nominating conventions. The Presidential Election Campaign Fund was created and designed to restore public confidence in the political process in a post-Watergate world. Since 1976, both parties have requested and received public funds to finance their nominating conventions, including as recently as this year. The aim of H.R. 5912 is to inject more private influence over elections, even though the current level is already appallingly high. This bill turns over another electoral function to private interests. It invites the very corruption the Presidential Election Campaign Fund was created to combat. This system needs to be reformed, not repealed, and we ought to be having a serious debate about the outsized role money plays in our politics.

Because the majority has failed to act, the ranking member of the House Administration Committee, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, was forced to have his own forum on the poisoning effect of money in politics. We have not considered the DISCLOSE Act or any legislation of substance to deal with the secret money influencing our politics. The Voter Empowerment Act was introduced months ago. Yet absolutely nothing has been done to address the threat of millions of voters being disenfranchised this November. Most appalling, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that

this Congress is making its own history as the least productive Congress in a generation.

This Congress has already considered the substance of the measure before us—at least twice—in November, 2011, and again this past January. To be blunt, Mr. Speaker, this is simply a waste of time. Unemployment insurance and Medicare physician payment rates need to be tackled. Middle class tax cuts are set to expire and we need to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. This bill does nothing to address deficit reduction, but here we are considering it while ignoring the looming sequester. We voted to repeal ObamaCare more than 30 times without voting on a serious jobs bill once. This piece of legislation further intertwines our political process with the private interests while pleas from the middle class are blatantly ignored and the economic future of this country hangs in the balance.

For almost 2 years now, serious issues have been ignored in favor of politically convenient empty gestures. And this is more of the same. It is time to get serious and it is time to get to work. We can start by opposing this legislation and urging the majority to address the real issues facing this country.

I urge a “no” vote, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame we’ve come to a point where it can be said on the floor of the House attempting to save the taxpayers of America \$36 million is a waste of time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), a distinguished member of the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on the Budget. Mr. COLE is the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. COLE. I thank my friend for yielding.

H.R. 5912 is a bipartisan bill to end public financing for political conventions. And that’s all it is.

I want to begin by thanking my friend, Mr. LOEBSACK from Iowa. We belong to different parties. I have no doubt we’ll be voting for different Presidential candidates. But we both agree that it’s wrong to use taxpayer dollars to finance partisan political events. And I appreciate his support in helping push this legislation.

Let me make it clear to everybody. I’m not opposed to political party conventions. I’ve gone to 10 of them. I actually had the privilege of helping stage one in 2000, when I was chief of staff of the Republican National Committee. And I can assure you that experience taught me that the parties are more than capable of putting on their conventions. They essentially do that now. The Federal component of the cost to the convention is about 23 percent of the total cost. So the idea that they can’t find the resources to do this

for themselves I think simply falls flat on its face.

This year, at a time when we’re going to be running trillion-dollar deficits for the fourth year in a row, we wrote checks to the Democratic Party and to the Republican Party, as my friend Mr. LUNGREN mentioned, for almost \$18 million each. For what? Was it really necessary? Does anybody really believe that was the best use of public money? Is there no program that’s more important? I can give you a list of better places for that money to go that we would probably agree on on both sides of the aisle.

It’s remarkable to me that we’ve reached a point in this body that this becomes an issue of some degree of partisan contention. The United States Senate passed, essentially, this legislation by 95-5 in an amendment by my friend, Mr. COBURN, to a larger piece of legislation. So there’s broad agreement in the Senate, which Democrats control, that this is a Federal expense that we no longer need to incur.

This bill is a small step, but it’s a stall step in the right direction. It’s a step to save taxpayer dollars for things that people need as opposed to things that politicians and political parties want. We ought to take this opportunity, work together, save the money, reduce the deficit by at least a modest amount, spend money in places where it’s necessary, and pass this bill. It’s a quite simple piece of legislation. Those folks that have a different point of view, bring your legislation to the floor, we’ll deal with that. But there’s no reason to pay for the Democratic and the Republican national conventions with taxpayer funds.

One last point, if I may, Mr. Speaker. We don’t do this for anybody else. There are other political groups and parties in America that I’m sure would like to have their conventions paid for. We don’t give them a single dime. So this actually perpetuates a bipartisan monopoly, if you will. There’s no public purpose in spending this money.

So I urge the passage. I urge some bipartisan cooperation.

Ms. FUDGE. Just to be clear, let me first say it will not reduce the deficit. This is a voluntary checkoff. This does not come from taxpayers’ dollars. It will not reduce the deficit. So let’s be clear.

Secondly, when he talked about the Senate having passed this on a 95-5 vote, he doesn’t say it was an amendment to the farm bill. It was not a standalone bill for this purpose.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LOEBSACK), a distinguished member of the Committee on Education and Workforce and the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding, and I do rise in support of this bill.

As we struggle to recover from the worst recession since the Great Depression, Congress must be good stewards of taxpayer funding and ensure that as families cut back and save, the government cuts back and saves as well.

I have been pleased to work with Congressman COLE to promote this legislation. And as the only Democratic cosponsor, I do want to thank him for his work on this bill. I’m also pleased that Senator COBURN’s identical amendment passed with huge bipartisan support in the Senate. And I do expect similar support in the House, as I think we can all agree on this commonsense way to ensure the prudent use of taxpayer funds.

This bill will prohibit the use of public funding for political party conventions like the recent ones in Tampa and Charlotte. It will also put any leftover funding toward deficit reduction. And while I did not attend the convention this year so I could focus on the needs of Iowans, I know there is an important role some convention activities play for the political parties and for the country, and indeed for the political process in America. However, I do not believe that taxpayer dollars need to be used to fund them, especially when public funding, as was mentioned, only makes up 23 percent of the cost of the conventions, is far outweighed by private donations, and is used for purposes not necessarily critical to the continuance of our stable democracy.

□ 1750

While Iowa families are struggling each day just to pay the bills, Washington should as well be focused on ensuring proper use of taxpayer resources. While I certainly appreciate the concerns of those opposed to this bill, I nonetheless hope that the House agrees that parties at political conventions are not a proper purpose or use of funds, taxpayer dollars.

I do hope that my colleagues will support Congressman COLE’s legislation to ensure taxpayer funds are not being used for either Republican or Democratic Parties, and that in the future, I would like to see us be much more thoughtful regarding where we apply public funds in the political process. I think there is an important role for that.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Let me be clear again: This is a voluntary checkoff. They check the box because they want the money to go to conventions and/or political activity. It is not something that we require them to do. It is voluntary. So if, in fact, we are going to stop and give the money back, the money should go back to the American people, not to reduce the deficit, because that is the purpose for which the money was sent to us in the first place.

With that, I urge a “no” vote and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it may be a voluntary checkoff, but the money is not voluntary. It is part of the income tax you are required to pay. While we all do support government, I would wonder, if you made the income tax entirely voluntary, whether we could get anything close to what we do now. It is, in fact, the tax that you must pay. So that part is not voluntary.

Secondly, I'm surprised that one would not want to attribute this to reducing the deficit even though it's only \$36 million, as suggested by the other side. If we can't even do this here, what confidence can the American people have that we would deal with the tougher issues and larger amounts? If \$36 million is too difficult for us to use to somehow reduce the deficit, what hope is there that we can do anything seriously in this Congress or Congresses in the future?

I must respond to the repeated suggestion that we have done nothing in this Congress.

The Obama administration would be surprised, since they said that the FISA amendments, which we passed on this floor with 301 positive votes, were the number one priority for the administration in the area of intelligence. In the aftermath of what happened just a couple of weeks ago, one would think that we would understand the seriousness of intelligence. And that which is the greatest tool, according to the DNI currently and previous DNIs, that tool, which got strong bipartisan support, was indeed an important thing for us to do here.

We had three free trade agreements that we finally approved. They have been waiting around for a number of years. The consensus is they create jobs in this economy and give us a fair playing field in which our workers can compete.

We had a transportation bill that we passed. We dealt with the interest paid on student loans. And I would just say, for 2 years in a row, we have, in fact, spent less on discretionary spending than we did the preceding year. I think that's the first time we've done that in a generation.

There are other things that I could talk about. It is a shame that the other body has not acted on the nearly 30 bills we've sent over there that deal with jobs.

Oh, yes, we also had my bill, H.R. 4, which repealed that section of the President's health care bill that placed an inordinate paperwork burden on small business, and that was the number one priority of the small business community in the country.

I wish we would do more. I wish we would have the cooperation of the other body. It's very difficult to negotiate when the other party won't come to the table or even articulate what their position is; but, nonetheless, I would suggest that those things I have spoken about are not unimportant.

But, of course, that's a digression because that's not talking about the bill before us.

The bill before us is a simple bill. All it does is say that the party's over. The taxpayer will no longer pay with taxpayer dollars for the conventions of the two national parties. Doesn't stop them from having their conventions, doesn't denigrate their conventions, doesn't take them off television; it just says the American taxpayer will not pay for it. We're going to save \$36 million. Fairly straight forward, fairly simple.

I would hope that we would have a strong bipartisan vote for this, because it is truly a bipartisan problem and timely, because many of our constituents, at least when I was home in the district, said, Why are you in the Congress voting to put taxpayer dollars for these conventions?

That was a tough question to answer. We can answer that question here in a very bipartisan way by passing this bill.

With that, I would ask my colleagues to support H.R. 5912, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 5912. This bill is flawed in substance and comes to the floor without serious deliberation or debate.

I want to make clear, however, that my colleague from Oklahoma and I agree that paying for presidential nominating conventions is not a wise use of taxpayer dollars. In fact, the main provisions of Mr. COLE's bill are included nearly verbatim in my Presidential Funding Act H.R. 414. However, H.R. 5912 excludes a critical prohibition on the use of "soft money" to fund conventions, keeping the door open for unlimited soft money donations from corporations and high-dollar special interests. Allowing conventions to accept millions of dollars in these unregulated contributions could threaten the credibility of the nominating process and further erode the principle of one voice, one vote.

I also take issue with the closed process under which this bill has been brought to the floor. H.R. 5912 is being considered under suspension of the rules, without amendments, committee markup, or serious deliberation. The Committee on House Administration has not even held hearings on this bill. But that should come as no surprise—the Majority has not held a single hearing on the issue of campaign finance in the 112th Congress, a period that has seen the House pass bills dismantling many of the common-sense campaign reforms of the post-Watergate era. I have opposed repeated floor votes that would repeal the presidential public financing system as a whole. This bill is merely the latest cynical attempt to attack the system with no effort to replace it.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's thoroughly misguided Citizens United decision, we should be working to strengthen—not to weaken—the rules that ensure our elections are free and fair. That is why Mr. VAN HOLLEN, other colleagues, and I will introduce a bill later this week which will be an important first step toward the comprehensive reform that our democratic elections need.

Our bill, the Empowering Citizens Act, will incorporate and improve H.R. 414, reforming and strengthening the presidential public financing system. In addition, it will establish a voluntary small-donor public financing program

for congressional campaigns. Finally, it will establish strong rules forbidding coordination among candidate-specific SuperPACs and political parties or campaigns, thereby lessening the outside influence of special interests and outside spending groups in our elections.

I believe that we are at a tipping point in the short history of campaign finance reform—we can either choose to stand by the common-sense reforms that have restored America's faith in elections after the Watergate scandal, or we can choose to cede control of political campaigns entirely to wealthy corporations and interest groups. The responsible choice is clear. I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5912, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

DISASTER LOAN FAIRNESS ACT OF 2012

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6296) to amend the Small Business Act to provide the interest rate for certain disaster related loans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6296

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Disaster Loan Fairness Act of 2012".

SEC. 2. INTEREST RATE FOR CERTAIN DISASTER RELATED LOANS.

Section 7(d) of the Small Business Act is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(8)(A) Upon application, the Administration shall grant an interest rate determined under this paragraph with respect to any qualifying disaster loan.

"(B) For the purposes of this paragraph a qualifying disaster loan is the Administration's share of a loan—

"(i) for which the interest rate would be set pursuant to paragraph (5) but for the operation of this paragraph;

"(ii) which is or was made with respect to activity in an area when the President has declared a major disaster in that area under section 401 of the Stafford Act; and

"(iii) which is or was made during the period beginning January 1, 2011, and ending on the date that is 4 years after the date of the enactment of the Disaster Loan Fairness Act of 2012.

"(C) The Administrator shall determine the interest rate for each calendar year to be the lesser of—

"(i) 4 percent; and

"(ii) a rate equivalent to ½ the rate prevailing in the private market for similar