

there 25 years ago, fighting the undue influence of unlimited campaign donations. I cosponsored his 1989 constitutional amendment that would have given Congress power to enact laws regulating the amount of independent expenditures. I was there with him. But I guess times have changed. I am aware that the Republican leader has stated that his views on the matter of campaign finance have changed over the years. What a gross understatement. But as Victor Hugo wrote:

Change your opinions, but keep your principles. Change your leaves, but keep your roots.

At one time the Republican leader was rooted in the principle that the wealthy shouldn't be able to buy public office whether for themselves or for others. Even as recently as late in 2007 he was preaching donor disclosure. What has changed in the last few years?

Over the last several years we have witnessed the Koch brothers trying to buy America, to pump untold millions into our democracy, hoping to get a government that would serve their bottom line and make them more money. The news today says they are out promoting themselves, and that is easy to do because they are worth \$150 billion.

So we are watching the corrupting influence that the Republican leader foretold 27 years ago and many years thereafter before our very eyes. He switched teams. What could have possibly convinced the senior Senator from Kentucky that limitless, untraceable campaign donations aren't really that bad after all?

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now that the President has conducted initial consultations with our allies and stated his objective to degrade and destroy ISIL, it is time to present a strategy to Congress. I hope he will begin to do that today.

He needs to identify military objectives and explain how those ends will be accomplished. He needs to present this plan to Congress and the American people, and where the President believes he lacks authority to execute such a strategy, he needs to explain to Congress how additional authority for the use of force will protect America. The threat from ISIL is real and is growing. It is time for President Obama to exercise some leadership in launching a response.

We know the administration has authorized military actions to protect American lives. Now we need to hear what additional measures will be taken to defeat ISIL.

SPEECH SUPPRESSION

Earlier today one Democratic Senator urged his colleagues to get serious about the real challenges facing our country—challenges such as dealing with the threat of ISIL. He implored fellow Democrats not to focus all their time instead “doing things that are of lesser importance.”

Yet his voice seems to have been ignored by the Democrats who run the Senate, because here we stand debating their proposal on whether to take an eraser—an eraser—to the First Amendment. Here we are debating whether to grant politicians the extraordinary authority to ban speech they don't like. That is what Democratic leaders have brought to the floor this week as their top priority. It is a measure so extreme it could even open the door to government officials banning books and pamphlets that threaten or annoy them. That is not my argument. That is essentially the Obama administration's own position, one that his own lawyers advocated in the Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* case. As one USA Today columnist put it at the time: “It isn't often that a government lawyer stands before the Supreme Court and acknowledges that, yes, it would be constitutional to ban a book. But that is what happened.”

Truly shocking.

These are the depths to which the Obama administration and its Democratic majority appear willing to drag our country in order to retain their hold on power. They are tired of listening to criticism of their failed policies. They are sick of having to sell the middle class on ideas that actually hurt the middle class. And with the Democrats' fragile Senate majority hanging by a thread, it seems they are done playing with the normal rules of democracy. It seems they would rather just rewrite the rules altogether to shut up their critics and shut down their opponents, even as they continue to give a path to leftwing tycoons they like—folks who preach higher taxes and more regulations for everybody else—while jealously guarding pet projects and sweetheart deals for themselves.

The aim here, just as with the IRS scandal, is to use the levers of power to shut down the voice of we the people when we the people don't see things their way. The First Amendment is the only thing standing in the way.

We all know the real reason Senate Democrats are so determined to push this measure now. They are not actually all that serious about passing it this week. In fact, they designed it to fail because they think its failure would help turn more leftwingers out to the polls. The entire spectacle is mostly about saving the jobs of Democratic Senators come November. Yet it must be admitted that it is getting harder to tell which of our Democratic friends are cynical in their support of this and which are sincere, because the number of true believers in speech sup-

pression appears to be growing on the other side, and that is really worrying for the future of our democracy.

So look, if the Democrats who run Washington are so determined to force the Senate into debate over repealing the free speech protections of the First Amendment, then fine, let's have a full and proper debate. Let's make the country see what this is really all about. Let's expose this extremist effort to the light of public scrutiny.

I suspect our Democratic friends don't really want that, though. I suspect they hope to just drop a few talking points, have their proposal fail, shoot some indignant e-mails to their supporters and move on. I don't think they counted on Senators standing up for the American people. I don't think they counted on Senators exposing their plans to entrench the tools of government speech suppression. So they would rather not have a debate they can't win.

Then here is a better idea. We all just spent the past several weeks back in our home States talking to our constituents. They have a lot on their minds these days—important issues they expect the Democrat-run Senate to address—things such as high unemployment, rising health care costs, and an ongoing crisis at the border. I, for one, will be interested to hear how repealing part of the First Amendment creates jobs for Americans or reduces health care costs. The answer of course is it doesn't, and the Republican-controlled House has already sent over countless bills that continue to collect dust on the majority leader's desk. There are many bills on job creation alone, including legislation that passed the House, with significant bipartisan support.

So if Senate Democrats want to take up some of that serious House-passed legislation instead of endless designed-to-fail political votes, we will be happy to do it. Just say the word.

Let's end the Democrats' endless gridlock and get some bills to the President's desk for once because Americans are not demanding that Congress repeal the free speech protections of the First Amendment. That is certainly not on their minds. They are looking to us to work together to get some things done for them for a change, and we can as soon as our Democratic friends want to get serious.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I agree with the Republican leader's defense of the First Amendment, but the constitutional amendment before us is not about limiting free speech. My Democratic colleagues and I are trying to address the special interest money that threatens to create a government of elected officials who are beholden to a few wealthy individuals.

As the respected Justice John Paul Stevens recently told us, money is not speech. Of course it isn't, and we know that.

Last week there was a recorded speech given at the Koch brothers' secret meeting place in San Diego or thereabouts. It was a secret meeting on their political strategy. They called it a summit. They had security guards. They cleared everybody who could come. It was very delicate. You had to be the right person or they would not let you into the meeting. However, there was one person who was able to record what went on at that meeting.

One of the speakers who was recorded—no others—was a man by the name of Richard Fink, who is vice president of Koch Industries. He is a big shot with the Koch brothers. Of course the Koch brothers were there listening to his speech. He said some pretty terrible and vicious things about unemployed Americans. He basically called them lazy. He went on to say that the minimum wage leads to fascism. I am not making this up. That is what he said—fascism. He even compared minimum wage with tactics utilized by Nazi Germany and modern-day suicide bombers. That is what the Koch brothers' representative said in their presence and in the presence of a number of higher ranking Republican officials.

He has a right to say whatever he wants; that is the country we live in. But as Senators we have a responsibility to stand for constituents who are unemployed or on minimum wage, and on this side of the aisle we have done that. The American people agree with us—not just Democrats and Independents. Republicans believe there should be an increase in the minimum wage.

The Republican leader was at the summit the very day Mr. Fink made his offensive remarks. He was there. Why has he not gone on Record repudiating these vicious and unfair comments about the poor? In fact, it has been reported the Republican leader referred to the speeches given at the Koch brothers' conference that day as inspiring—inspiring.

There are 150,000 unemployed Kentuckians. Are they leaning toward fascism? There are families in Kentucky who live on minimum wage—or try to. I don't think my friend the Republican leader views them as fascist stooges or lazy, but he should stand and repudiate what the Koch brothers, through their representatives, said at the conference he attended. If any Member of this body said as much, I have no doubt my friend would come to his constituents' immediate defense. But be careful what you say about the Koch brothers. They are very sensitive. They want that to protect their \$75 billion. There are two of them, and together they are worth \$150 billion. Nobody messes with them because they have money to try to buy America, and that is what they are trying to do.

Do we need campaign finance reform? Of course we do. I gave some quotes earlier, and my friend the Presiding Officer is a very smart man. As well as being a Rhodes Scholar, he graduated

from one of the most famous educational institutions in the world, Stanford University. He is a pretty bright guy as a Presiding Officer. But you don't have to be a bright guy to understand the flip-flop. I don't know how else to describe it. He gave his little speech a minute ago about the First Amendment. I am not making this up. This is what the man said. The same man complaining about how the First Amendment has been violated is the same man who has sponsored basically the same legislation we are now trying to pass.

I will give some of his quotes again. Let's make sure they are spread across the RECORD.

What we ought to do is eliminate the political action committee contributions, because those are the ones that raise the specter of undue influence. And those can be gone tomorrow. We can pass a bill tomorrow to take care of that problem.

Here is another quote:

We Republicans have put together a responsible and Constitutional campaign reform agenda. It would restrict the power of special interest PACS, stop the flow of all soft money, keep wealthy individuals from buying public office.

Hallelujah. I am glad he said that.

He also said:

We would eliminate PACs altogether. It will be interesting to see whether our colleagues—

Talking about Democrats—

on the other side of the aisle will be willing to eliminate PACs altogether. And we would have the money come from individuals in small and fully undisclosed amounts.

Next quote:

Public disclosure of campaign contributions and spending should be expedited so voters can judge for themselves what is appropriate. These are the reforms which respect the Constitution and would enhance our democracy.

I didn't rewrite this. This is a direct, word-for-word quote. Next:

We need to have real disclosure. And so what we ought to do is broaden the disclosure to include at least labor unions and tax-exempt business associations and trial lawyers so that you include the major political players in America. Why would a little disclosure be better than a lot of disclosure?

He also went on to say:

Money is essential in politics, and not something that we should feel squeamish about, provided the donations are limited and disclosed, everyone knows who's supporting everyone else.

I repeat. The Presiding Officer is one of the smartest people we have in the entire Senate. With all due respect to the Presiding Officer, you don't have to be a Rhodes Scholar or a graduate from Stanford University to understand how absolutely irrational my friend is with what he just came and said. He said this constitutional amendment is violating the First Amendment of our Constitution. I am using his remarks to state and show the importance of our amendment.

Congress and the States have the authority—or they should have the authority—to set reasonable limits on

campaign spending. It is just common sense. Americans clearly believe in this amendment. The amendment would restore the authority back to Congress and the States, not to two wealthy brothers who are trying to buy America—two wealthy brothers who control most of the tar sands in the world. They have a huge oil, gas, and chemical interest. They control lots of stuff.

Today the paper said they are going to spend their millions to tell everybody what great people they are. That is all over the news today. Be aware of the Koch brothers because they have unlimited sums of money. They are going to tell you how they are all about apple pie and motherhood and great for America. They are not great for America. They are trying to buy America.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

POLITICAL SPEECH

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, political speech is not on the fringes of the First Amendment, it is the core freedom of democracy. The entire point of the First Amendment is to say the government has no business telling the citizens what constitutes reasonable political speech.

Congress is not allowed to ban books. Congress is not allowed to ban magazines or pamphlets. Congress is not allowed to silence dissent. The idea behind this amendment is that government should have the power to silence criticism of the government. This amendment, referring to Senate Joint Resolution 19, is an attempt to control the words Americans speak and the ideas Americans hear. Every great movement in our democracy has been based on ideas that were at one time or another at the outset deemed unreasonable by the government. It is dangerous and it is un-American in the extreme. Under this proposed amendment, the Federal Government would have the power to decide which groups, which causes, which arguments, and ultimately which citizens would be allowed to enter the public square.

The amendment would even empower Congress to distinguish between natural individuals and artificial entities; that is, rich and powerful people will still be free to influence our government but everyone else can be barred