

I am glad to see the House taking seriously the risk of foreign interference in domestic elections. In that spirit, I encourage my colleagues to consider other comprehensive democracy reforms to close loopholes.

House Democrats' Freedom to Vote Act, which includes the DISCLOSE Act, would crack down on foreign campaign spending, and I think it is well past time for Congress to do something to stem the tide of dark money, including foreign money, in American elections.

This bill is a start, and I think I would continue to urge us to do more.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1710

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill is broadly about making sure that American elections are for American citizens only.

As my colleague Mr. MORELLE noted, there is a significant, gaping hole in U.S. campaign finance laws, and, in particular, that is in relation to the measures that we have spoken about, about ballot initiatives, other essential pieces of American democracy that currently allow for foreign funding to come in and influence those campaigns.

While that is not an office seeker for elected office, I think it is without a doubt that those elections and those ballot initiatives are in many ways equally essential to American democracy. Closing out this gap and making sure that foreign funds are not finding their way into U.S. elections is absolutely essential.

I thank my colleague, Mr. FITZPATRICK, for authoring this legislation, understanding the importance of making sure that we are rooting out foreign funds inside U.S. elections. There is a basic premise and a basic principle, and in a particular period of time when it is so simple and so easy for funds to be transmitted into these political activities here in the United States of America, an individual outside of the United States could easily move funds in to influence a U.S. election.

Of course, it is illegal for a donation to be made to an individual seeking Federal elected office, but right now the underlying law does not ban that for purposes of ballot initiatives, local ballot initiatives, referenda, or recall elections.

This legislation fixes that very important point.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORELLE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I concur with my colleague about the importance of making sure that we don't have involvement of foreign entities into our politics.

If I can just opine for a minute, I do think in many ways one of the real

challenges facing this country right now is a lack of faith in their government and Americans losing trust and losing faith. Part of that is because of the broad influence of money just generally in our politics. You see billionaires contributing hundreds of millions of dollars. We see the influence of dark money, of super-PACs.

I am looking forward to over the next several months working with my colleagues, and over the next several years, if need be, to repair some of the damage to those relationships and let the people of this country know that the democracy which we celebrated 250 years of this month that it is in their hands, that they are ultimately the sovereigns, and that there weren't outside influences. But I think that is becoming harder and harder to be able to make that point and to convince people of that without dramatic changes in the way we finance our campaigns and the way that the public dialogue engages.

Frankly, I am disappointed in the Supreme Court's decision just this month related to coordination between super-PACs and party committees and individual candidates. I think there is much to do. If we are going to have the ability to persuade American citizens that their government is theirs, we are going to have to take out the influence of all manner of people. Certainly, this bill is a step in the right direction.

I see my colleague, the sponsor of the bill, has arrived, so I will certainly let him address the House.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK), the author of this bill who is not only a colleague but also a friend.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my legislation, H.R. 3535, the Stop Foreign Funds in Elections Act.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is built on a simple principle: American elections should be decided by the American people, not by the influence of foreign actors.

The Stop Foreign Funds in Elections Act closes a dangerous and longstanding loophole in our current election system. While current Federal law already prohibits foreign nationals from contributing to candidates running for office, there remains gaps when it comes to State and local ballot measures.

Ballot initiatives, referendum, and recall elections often determine major public policy questions that directly affect American communities, yet existing law does not clearly prohibit foreign money from being used to influence these outcomes. This bill closes that loophole.

Madam Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. Whether the issue on the

ballot is one you support or oppose, every American should agree that the outcome should reflect the will of the American voters, not the financial influence of foreign interests.

Our elections and ballot measures exist to give the American people a voice, not outside actors with agendas that may conflict with our national interests.

The Stop Foreign Funds in Elections Act simply extends an existing safeguard to ensure that all taxpayer-funded elections receive the same protection from foreign influence.

I thank Congressman GOLDEN for his partnership on this legislation as well as Chairman STEIL and Ranking Member MORELLE for their engagement on this legislation.

I urge all my colleagues to support this commonsense bill to strengthen the integrity of our electoral system and ensure that our democratic process remains accountable to the citizens that it serves.

Mr. MORELLE. Madam Speaker, again, I reiterate my support for the bill, and I want to thank the bill's sponsors, Mr. FITZPATRICK as well as Mr. GOLDEN, for their work on this bill and continue to believe that there is much we can do and much that we need to do. This is an important step along the way.

I thank my colleague and my friend Chairman STEIL for bringing this bill before us.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I will close by saying I thank my colleague BRIAN FITZPATRICK from Pennsylvania and Ranking Member MORELLE for their work on closing this gap in Federal law.

I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 3535, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3535.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEC ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS ACT

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8738) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to require electronic report filing for persons making certain electioneering communications and to permit political committees to make disbursements other than by check.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8738

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 "FEC Administrative Improvements Act".

SEC. 2. REQUIRING ELECTRONIC FILING.

Section 304(a)(11)(A)(i) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (52 U.S.C. 30104(a)(11)(A)(i)) is amended by inserting "or makes electioneering communications" after "expenditures".

SEC. 3. PERMITTING POLITICAL COMMITTEES TO MAKE DISBURSEMENTS BY METHODS OTHER THAN CHECK.

Section 302(h)(1) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (52 U.S.C. 30102(h)(1)) is amended by striking "except by check drawn on such accounts in accordance with this section" and inserting "except from such accounts".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MORELLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in strong support of H.R. 8738, the FEC Administrative Improvements Act.

I thank my friends, Ranking Member MORELLE and the chair of our Subcommittee on Elections, Representative LEE from Florida, for their leadership on this legislation.

Our campaign finance system wasn't designed for the digital age. That extends to the statutes governing the work of the Federal Elections Commission.

This bill implements several recommendations from the FEC to modernize their administrative operations and reduce outdated administrative burdens.

The bill expands the electronic filing requirements to electioneering communications reports and allows political committees to make disbursements by methods other than checks.

Madam Speaker, the work of the FEC is important to our Federal election system. This bill improves their efficiency and modernizes our campaign finance system for the digital age.

I urge immediate passage of the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1720

Mr. MORELLE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I agree again with my colleague and friend Chairman STEIL, this is a meaningful, bipartisan bill to ensure that the public receives important information about election-relevant communications.

I was happy to reintroduce this bill with several members of the Committee on House Administration, both Republican and Democratic. I thank Chairman STEIL for his leadership and Congresswoman LEE and Congresswoman SEWELL for their work on this.

As people may know, Congresswoman LEE and Congresswoman SEWELL, in particular, work hard on election administration issues as the leaders of the committee's Elections Subcommittee. As it becomes harder to find common ground in Congress, I commend my cosponsors for their work on this and other issues important to the work at hand.

The bill we are considering today, the FEC Administrative Improvements Act, would amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to require campaign committees to file their electioneering communications with the Federal Elections Commission in electronic format as opposed to on paper.

As the FEC has informed Congress: "Compared to data from paper reports, data from electronically filed reports is received, processed, and disseminated more easily and efficiently, resulting in the better use of resources." I couldn't agree more.

In contrast, paper filings take days to be available to provide critical information for the public, so modernizing our campaign disclosure functions is a commonsense reform for those of us who live in the 21st century, and we are grateful we have an opportunity to do that.

However, there are substantive reasons to make this change as well. The Supreme Court has long recognized that disclosure requirements are vitally important: Disclosure provides the electorate with information as to where political campaign money comes from and how it is spent.

American voters are best equipped to choose leaders when they have the most fulsome, up-to-date information at hand. The FEC Administrative Improvements Act would also tackle another bipartisan legislative recommendation from the FEC, allowing committees to make disbursement in ways other than by check.

The Committee on House Administration—and I think I speak for colleagues on both sides—cares deeply about modernization. Modernizing Congress has, in recent years, driven thoughtful and bipartisan work by committee members to improve the function of this institution.

Our interest in modernization extends to the FEC, so H.R. 8738 will bring the FEC into the modern era and aid every American voter as they exercise their fundamental rights.

Given the bipartisan agreement on the bill, I hope we can move it rapidly from the floor to the Senate and then to the President's desk for signature.

Again, I thank my colleague Chairman STEIL for his courtesies and leadership on this.

Madam Speaker, very simply, I thank the chairman and my colleagues.

I look forward to what I hope is a unanimous or near-unanimous vote in the House on this important legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the ranking member, Mr. MORELLE, for his work on this legislation. There is a lot of work to be done to update our campaign finance laws for the digital age, and this is an important piece of legislation. I encourage all my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 8738. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8738.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VACATING ORDERING OF RECORDED VOTE ON RECONSIDERATION OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 1398, AND LAYING ON THE TABLE HOUSE RESOLUTION 1377

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the ordering of a recorded vote on the question of reconsideration of the vote on adoption of House Resolution 1398 be vacated to the end that the motion to reconsider be laid on the table and that House Resolution 1377 be laid on the table.

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

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. YAKYM) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed. Votes will be taken in the following order:

Motions to suspend the rules and pass:

H.R. 3106; and

H.R. 8897.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the remaining