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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 11, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAN MILLER to act as Speaker pro tempore for this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for 5 minutes.

POLITICAL SYSTEM OVERHAUL

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, for too long our political system has been in need of an overhaul. Our political campaigns last too long, they are too negative, and they cost far too much. Each year this country breaks the record-setting campaign spending of the previous year, and the end is never in sight. By some estimates over \$2.5 billion was spent on the 1996 elections. Mr. Speaker, clearly the system has become obscene.

Last week President Clinton came to this Chamber and he challenged this

House to pass meaningful campaign finance reform. He set July 4 as the deadline. I believe the House can certainly pass reform legislation by then and declare itself independent of the fundraising tyrant that plagues our system.

We all know that this is not a new issue. It is not an issue that needs to be studied and spoken and lobbied forever. The Members of the House know the issue of campaign finance reform, and they know it well. There is not one credible reason why the Republican leadership cannot get finance reform to the floor by the President's deadline. In fact, before the Republicans were in the majority, the House had passed campaign finance reform legislation. However, it was vetoed by President Bush.

When campaign finance reform laws were first created following the Nixon Watergate scandal, the goal was to get money out of the system and disclose to the American people exactly where the money was coming from to finance Federal campaigns. Over 20 years later, there is more money than ever in the system, and it is not being fully disclosed to the American people.

To begin with, the explosion of what we call soft money has infused more money into campaigns than ever before; nearly \$881 million in soft money, which is about 73 percent of the increase since 1992. This soft money comes from corporate and other sources specifically barred from campaigns by Federal law, and it has seeped into the system over the years and is now completely out of control. Our campaign finance laws need to be tightened when it comes to the issue of soft money.

Another problem is independent expenditures. Various well-funded interest groups from either side of the political spectrum will target their political opponents and spend millions to defeat them. However, these millions will not

count toward the current contribution limits, and the target of the independent expenditure has to raise even more money to stay competitive.

Finally, the cost of the campaigns themselves have completely gotten out of control. Television costs, between production and broadcasting, have gone through the roof. The same is true for radio. And any aspiring politician living in New York, Chicago, or the Los Angeles media market knows that the costs there alone may be the sole reason that keeps him or her from running. They simply cannot afford it.

The fact that someone should be scared away from running for office merely because they do not have the money, I believe, is a tragedy. How many good honest councilmen or small town mayors or clever businessmen or women were kept from going further in public service because they lacked the money? How many great Congressmen and Senators have left us because they were just sick of the fundraising chase and had enough? How many millionaires will decide to run for Congress and win not on the strength of their ideas but on the size of the bank accounts? Mr. Speaker, if we do not have campaign finance reform on the floor by July 4, we may just end up a Congress of millionaires and not of the people.

Although it is still fairly early in the session of Congress, there have been several good campaign finance reform bills already introduced in-house. I just wanted to mention some of them. There is a bipartisan bill introduced by the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MEEHAN] and the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] which seeks to implement voluntary spending limits, lower media costs, and eliminate soft money. This bill is the House version of the Senate McCain-Feingold bill that President Clinton endorsed. There is also another voluntary spending limits bill introduced by my colleague from California [Mr. PARR].

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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