

during the negotiations, and they are addressed in detail in the convention.

In addition, the Commerce Department's expertise in protecting the proprietary interests of U.S. companies will continue to assist our chemical industry. The strong support for the convention by the Chemical Manufacturers Association, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, and the National Federation of Independent Business is a tribute to the fact that the concerns of these industries are fully protected.

Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention is vital to America's national security. I commend all those who have done so much to make this achievement possible. It represents arms control at its best, and I urge my colleagues to vote for ratification.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the pending business.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 18) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I rise today to oppose the proposed constitutional amendment offered by the junior Senator from South Carolina and the senior Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. President, first I would like to say a few words about the Senator from South Carolina. Our colleague, Senator HOLLINGS, has been calling for meaningful campaign finance reform for perhaps longer than any other Member of the U.S. Senate. I disagree with this particular approach. But I certainly do not question his sincerity or commitment to reform.

Mr. President, when the U.S. Senate last had an extended debate on the issue of campaign finance reform back in 1993, the junior Senator from South Carolina offered a sense-of-the-Senate amendment to take up a constitutional amendment very similar to the one that is before us today.

I remember we had a very short period of time before that vote came up, and I made a decision and I voted with the Senator from South Carolina on that day. I did so because I believed that other than balancing the Federal budget, there was perhaps no more fundamental issue facing our country than the need to reform our election laws.

Such a serious topic I believed at the time merited at least a consideration

of a constitutional amendment. And I will confess to a certain level of frustration at that time with the fact that the Senate and the other body had not yet acted to pass meaningful campaign finance reform in that Congress.

But, Mr. President, to be candid, I immediately realized, even as I was returning to my office, that that might not have been the best vote I ever cast. I started rethinking right away whether I really wanted the U.S. Senate to seriously consider amending the first amendment to address even this subject of which I and so many other Americans feel passionately about.

Then, 18 months later, my perspective on this question began to change even more as I was presented with two new developments here in the U.S. Senate.

First, I was given the privilege of serving on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and, second, I would soon learn that the new 104th Congress was to become the engine for a trainload of proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I had a very good seat to witness first hand what was being attempted here with regard to the basic document of our country, the Constitution.

It started with a proposal right away for a balanced budget constitutional amendment, and we were considering a term limits constitutional amendment, and then a flag desecration constitutional amendment, then a school prayer amendment, then a supermajority tax increase amendment, and then a victims rights amendment. In all, Mr. President, 135 constitutional amendments were introduced in the last Congress.

As I saw legislator after legislator suggest that every social, economic, and political problem we have in this country could be solved merely with enactment of a constitutional amendment, I chose to strongly oppose not only this constitutional amendment but others that also sought to undermine our most treasured founding principle. I firmly believe we must continue this reflective practice of attempting to cure each and every political and social ill of our Nation by tampering with the U.S. Constitution. Mr. President, the Constitution of this country was not a rough draft. We must stop treating it as such.

I want to say, because the Senator from South Carolina has just arrived and I know that he is not one who has engaged in such an attitude toward the Constitution, I know very well he only makes a proposal like this with the most serious consideration and for the goal of trying to do something about campaign spending. What I am addressing here, what I saw in the last Congress was a wholesale attempt to try to amend what seemed to be almost virtually every part of the U.S. Constitution.

We must also understand that even if this constitutional amendment were to

pass this body today, which it will not, but even if it did, it would not take us one single, solitary step closer to campaign finance reform. It is not a silver bullet. This constitutional amendment merely empowers the Congress to set mandatory spending limits on congressional candidates. Those are the same kind of mandatory limits that were struck down in the landmark Buckley versus Valeo decision.

Here is the question I pose for supporters of this amendment: If this constitutional amendment were to pass the Congress and be ratified by the States, would campaign finance reformers have the necessary 51 votes—or more likely what would be required would be 60 votes—to pass legislation that included mandatory spending limits?

Mr. President, in January I joined the senior Senator from Arizona in introducing the first bipartisan campaign finance reform proposal in over a decade. That proposal, unlike the law that was considered in Buckley versus Valeo, includes voluntary spending limits. That is to say, Mr. President, we offer incentives in the form of free and discounted television time to encourage but not require candidates to limit their campaign spending. When the Senator from Arizona and I bring that legislation to the floor of the Senate, I have no doubt that we will be met with strong resistance from a number of Senators. So the notion that this constitutional amendment will somehow magically pave the way for legislation that includes mandatory spending limits simply ignores the reality of the opposition that campaign finance reformers face here in the Senate and I think would face in the Senate at the time of ratification of any such amendment.

Mr. President, this amendment certainly, if ratified, would remove the obstacle of the Supreme Court. But it will not remove the obstacle of those Senators such as the junior Senator from Kentucky who believe that we need more money, not less, in our political system.

Most disconcerting to me, Mr. President, is what this proposed constitutional amendment would mean to the first amendment. I find nothing more sacred and treasured in our Nation's history than the first amendment. It is perhaps the one tenet of our Constitution that sets our country apart from every mold of government form and tested by mankind throughout history. No other country has a provision quite like the first amendment.

The first amendment is the bedrock of the Bill of Rights. It has as its underpinnings the notion that each individual has a natural and fundamental right to disagree with their elected leaders. It says that a newspaper has an unfettered right to publish expressions of political or moral thought. It says that the Government may not establish a State-based religion that would infringe on the rights of those