

jams need our help. They want their highway taxes used to get them out of gridlock, but we cannot do that while the Senate is stuck in legislative gridlock. I urge the majority leader to get the Senate—and the country—out of gridlock by calling up the highway bill now.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, February 23, 1998, the Federal debt stood at \$5,519,492,792,898.57 (Five trillion, five hundred nineteen billion, four hundred ninety-two million, seven hundred ninety-two thousand, eight hundred ninety-eight dollars and fifty-seven cents).

Five years ago, February 23, 1993, the Federal debt stood at \$4,195,090,000,000 (Four trillion, one hundred ninety-five billion, ninety million).

Ten years ago, February 23, 1988, the Federal debt stood at \$2,472,592,000,000 (Two trillion, four hundred seventy-two billion, five hundred ninety-two million).

Fifteen years ago, February 23, 1983, the Federal debt stood at \$1,207,534,000,000 (One trillion, two hundred seven billion, five hundred thirty-four million).

Twenty-five years ago, February 23, 1973, the Federal debt stood at \$452,993,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-two billion, nine hundred ninety-three million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,066,499,792,898.57 (Five trillion, sixty-six billion, four hundred ninety-nine million, seven hundred ninety-two thousand, eight hundred ninety-eight dollars and fifty-seven cents) during the past 25 years.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I want to thank those who have participated thus far in this debate about campaign reform. I am sure that many of those who view C-SPAN with any regularity are experiencing a sense of *deja vu* about this debate, wondering whether or not we haven't already had debate very similar to this and whether we are not stuck in the same spot, whether we are ever going to stop talking about it and actually start moving toward some resolution. Today we are about to find out. This will give us the opportunity for the first time to vote this afternoon at 4 o'clock to indicate to the Amer-

ican people that, indeed, we have resolved to deal with the extraordinary problems that we have in campaign finance today. This is probably going to be our best chance in a generation for meaningful campaign reform, and a clear-cut vote is something that will allow us to move to that next step toward resolution. We do not need any procedural excuses, no amendment trees, no obfuscation. This will be clearly an up-or-down vote on the McCain-Feingold bill, through a tabling motion, that we have sought now for some time.

The vote on Senator MCCAIN's amendment answers the question, are you for reform or not? A vote against McCain-Feingold is a vote, in my view, to end reform, at least for this Congress, once again. I am very proud of the fact that each one of the members of the Democratic caucus will stand up and be counted. And my hope is that a number of Republicans will join us in this effort. The only question is how many Republicans and Democrats will come together in the middle to make this a reality this afternoon.

I believe the fate of campaign reform rests in the hands of those who have not yet publicly taken their positions with regard to campaign reform. It has been a generation since the last time we passed any meaningful legislation having to do with campaigns. In 1971 and in 1974, Congress enacted major reforms that first limited the amount of money in politics and, second, required candidates for the first time to disclose how they got their money. Today those laws are outdated and virtually useless, and some have been circumvented by new decisions and, as a result of those decisions, loopholes that have been created in the campaign finance law.

Other aspects of that reform effort in 1971 and 1974 today are unenforced or completely unenforceable because of the systematic defunding of the FEC, the Federal Election Commission. Still others have been overturned by narrow and, many believe, incorrect court decisions. Many reforms were thrown out by the Supreme Court in 1974 in the 5-to-4 ruling, a very controversial ruling, in *Buckley v. Valeo*.

So, for the last 23 years now, Democrats have tried to overcome obstacles put in place by the *Buckley* ruling and to pass a campaign finance reform modification, a realization that what happened in 1974, and what was addressed in that Court decision, needs to be addressed with clarification in statute.

So, consider the record of a decade, beginning in 1988. At the opening of the 100th Congress, then majority leader ROBERT BYRD introduced a bill to limit spending and reduce special interest influence. We had a record-setting eight cloture votes when that happened. Democratic sponsors modified the bill to meet objections, but the fact is that it was killed in a Republican filibuster.

In the Democratic-led 101st Congress, the House and the Senate passed cam-

paign finance bills. President Bush threatened to veto the bill, effectively killing it, because it contained voluntary spending limits.

In the 102d Congress, also a Democratically-led Congress, again the House and Senate passed campaign finance reform bills and President Bush vetoed the bill with the backing of all of his Republican filibuster.

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In the 103d Congress, again under Democratic control, we passed a campaign finance reform bill with 95 percent of the Democrats in the Senate and 91 percent of the Democrats in the House voting for reform. Again, Republicans filibustered the move to take the bill to conference.

That brings us, then, to the 104th Congress, supposedly the reform Congress. Senators MCCAIN and FEINGOLD introduced their bipartisan reform plan, and reform at that point, for the first time in almost 2 decades, actually seemed to be within reach. Republicans, again, in the Senate, filibustered the measure, while Republicans in the House introduced a bill to allow more spending—a family of four would have been able to contribute \$12.4 million in Federal election. The legislation again failed to produce results of any kind. As a result of that impasse, nothing was done for the remaining months of the 104th Congress, which now brings us to this Congress and last year.

In his State of the Union Message in January of 1997, President Clinton called on Congress to pass campaign finance reform by July 4, 1997. In the House, Republicans have voted time and again against bringing campaign finance reform to the floor. Speaker GINGRICH has promised consideration this year, but also shook hands with the President on a campaign reform commission that really never came to pass. Here in the Senate, we have traveled a tough road to get here today. We forced our way to the floor and refused to yield; poison pills, amendment trees and cloture votes were all tactics used, and this is probably the last opportunity we have to do something meaningful in the 105th Congress.

The problem is really one that can be described in one word: money. The amount of money, after two decades of delay, has skyrocketed. That is the fundamental problem. We hear talk in this debate about hard money and soft money, this money and that money. They are not the core of the problem. The core of the problem is that there is just too much money in politics, period. Total congressional campaign