

permanent adoptive homes, having placed 200 children last year alone. It helps children with AIDS with out-of-home placement. The Lutheran Adoption Service was also chosen as a pilot agency for developing an automated client information system, the Integrated Information System.

There is no doubt that many people will face difficulties during their lives. At those times, responsible assistance coupled with sensitive caring go a long way towards helping to ease problems. Robert Miles, the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Lutheran Child and Family Service, and all of the wonderful people associated with this fine organization can take pride in all that they have done, and all that they continue to do each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and all of our colleagues to join me in wishing Lutheran Child and Family Service of Michigan a most joyous 100th anniversary, and many more happy ones to come.

SAVE OUR CHILDREN FROM GUN
VIOLENCE

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 13, 1999

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, why won't this Congress listen to the American people and allow us to pass common sense laws to keep guns out of the hands of children?

I was optimistic when I first learned the other body would take-up amendments drafted to keep guns away from our children. I thought they may set an example for the House to follow by putting politics aside to save our children from gun violence.

But what happened? The other body defeated a simple, common sense measure that would have tightened regulations on the sale of guns at gun shows.

I ask you, why is this a political issue? How many more children will have to die before Congress wakes up and passes laws to save young lives?

I want you to know that we will not give up. We will only fight harder for what the American people want—common sense measures to keep guns away from our kids and off our school campuses. My office alone has heard from thousands of people throughout this country who support my legislation, the Children's Gun Violence Prevention Act. Today, a young student on Long Island let me know that her school sent a petition to the Speaker of this House, asking him to address the issue of children and guns.

Now more than ever, we need to hear from every school and from every parent in this nation. Call, write, e-mail—flood the halls of Congress with your demands—let this Congress know that you want meaningful legislation passed to save our children from gun violence. Every day that goes by with more silence, we lose 13 more kids.

THE FEC REFORM AND
AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1999

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 14, 1999

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, we tend to take our elections for granted, only briefly focusing attention when there is a disputed outcome or, more recently, to bemoan the lack of voter participation. This unfortunate detachment by the voting public is the result of many different factors, one of which is the lack of confidence in our election process. It is long past the time for Congress to recognize the vital importance of our election process and the need to shore up and strengthen our democratic election system. We can start by reforming the Federal Election Commission (FEC). I am confident that we can give the Federal Election Commission the necessary mandate and direction to better carry out its responsibilities.

As the ranking Democrat on the two House committees that directly oversee the Federal Election Commission, the House Administration Committee and the Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, I feel a special responsibility to do everything I can to make sure this agency functions with maximum fairness and efficiency. As Congress prepares to wrestle with campaign finance reform, it is important to note that even the most promising reform is meaningless unless the FEC is able to carry it out. Hopeful that the 106th Congress will pass Shays-Meehan, I am determined to see that the FEC is equipped at the earliest practicable time to enforce both the letter and spirit of this much needed measure.

To that end I am today introducing the FEC Reform and Authorization Act of 1999.

This bill, which I think my colleagues on both sides of the aisle can support, does not propose radical changes at the FEC because, quite frankly, radical change is not needed. As my colleagues know, in January the respected firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers delivered to Congress the results of a \$750,000 independent audit of the FEC that was ordered last year in the FY99 Treasury-Postal Appropriations Act. To many people's surprise, the audit concluded that the FEC is "a competently managed organization with a skilled and motivated staff" that executes its responsibilities "without partisan basis." The audit also found that "high ethical standards are espoused throughout the organization."

However, PricewaterhouseCoopers did recommend several common-sense actions that would improve the FEC's performance. "The FEC's continued success will require that the agency aggressively pursue both incremental and significant changes in organization, work process, technology, and management practice," the report said.

Several of these recommendations have since been formally endorsed by a majority of the FEC commissioners, making them truly bipartisan in nature. In addition, the FEC commissioners have themselves delivered to Congress a list of bipartisan recommendations, not explicitly included in the audit, that would help the agency do its job better.

Mr. Speaker, this bill incorporates 29 recommendations that were either included in the audit and endorsed by the FEC, or were sup-

ported by a bipartisan majority of the FEC commission members. Together they will improve the efficiency and productivity of the FEC.

Most of the recommendations included in this bill address such diverse areas as filing deadlines for campaign reports, eligibility rules for presidential campaign public financing, and FEC administrative procedures. Other can be regarded as more thorough campaign reform, like Section 201, which prohibits foreign nationals, who are now prohibited from making hard money contributions, from making soft money contributions as well.

Each of these technical changes would fine-tune current FEC practices and clarify inconsistencies in current law that have confused FEC officials, contributors, and candidates alike who have had every intention of fairly obeying the law, but have not always been sure just what that law is. I firmly believe that when the underlying statutes are clear to all affected parties, administering and enforcing the law becomes a much more efficient, inexpensive, and straight-forward process.

Mr. Speaker, I do, however, want to spotlight one of the centerpieces of my bill, electronic filing, which was the main audit recommendation and one of the first recommendations that all six FEC commissioners endorsed soon after the audit was released.

Section 101 of this bill instructs the FEC to develop a comprehensive, mandatory electronic data filing system for the major filers. Mandatory electronic filing has been discussed for several years now. Unfortunately, no compelling case has been made for it. After studying the audit and hearing from the FEC, I am convinced that mandatory electronic filing is one of the most important changes we can make. Not only would electronic filing speed up the time it takes for campaign financial reports to be posted on the Web and made available to the public, it would also set off a chain reaction that would allow FEC auditors to analyze campaign reports much more quickly than they presently can. This in turn would allow them to forward much more quickly to the FEC General Counsel's office alleged violations of the law, giving the General Counsel more time to investigate cases before they go stale. In recent years, my Republican colleagues have sharply criticized the General Counsel's office for its slow pace and tendency to dismiss too many cases. Electronic filing will provide the FEC with the tools necessary to expedite its business.

While it is important to look for cost-effective ways to make the FEC more efficient, it is also crucial that the agency be given the funds needed to thoroughly conduct their business. This bill would authorize the FEC budget at \$38,516,000 which is identical to the President's budget request. This is \$2 million more than the FEC's FY99 budget, a 5 percent increase.

Let me conclude by saying that Congress has not passed an FEC authorization bill in 19 years. There are many reasons for this, chiefly an absence of a coherent blueprint that both parties could accept. I regard the independent audit, and this legislation which I am introducing today, as that blueprint for bipartisan action and urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support it.