

grant, further small-dollar matching, and vouchers for purchasing television advertising. The candidate could continue to raise an unlimited amount of \$150 contributions, as well as contributions from small-donor People PACs.

Under the Fair Elections Now Act, candidates would have an incentive to seek small donations. And citizens would have an incentive to donate to the candidate of their choice, knowing that their small donation of \$150 would be converted to a \$900 donation through the 6 to 1 Fair Elections match.

Citizens would also be eligible for a modest, refundable tax credit. The Fair Elections Now Act establishes the “My Voice Tax Credit” to encourage individuals to make small donations to campaigns. Citizens could also make their voices heard by aggregating small contributions of \$150 or less into a type of small-donor political action committee, known as a “People PAC.” People PACs would then be permitted to make campaign contributions to qualified Fair Elections candidates. Coupled with the Fair Elections public financing system, People PACs would elevate the views and interests of a diverse spectrum of Americans, rather than those of the traditional, wealthy donor class.

Our country is facing major challenges. We need to continue to create more jobs and restore economic security for the middle class. We need to build and sustain our transportation infrastructure. We need to fix our broken immigration system. We need to ensure that the right to vote is protected and preserved.

But with high-powered, special interest lobbyists fighting every proposal to make our country stronger, it is incredibly difficult for members of Congress to make progress on behalf of their constituents. This bill would dramatically reduce the influence of these special interests and wealthy donors, because Fair Elections candidates would not need their money to run campaigns. As a result, the bill would enhance the voice of average Americans. Let me be clear: the overwhelming majority of people serving in American politics are good, honest people, and I believe that most members of Congress are guided by the best of intentions. But we are nonetheless stuck in a terrible, corrupting system.

A recent poll found bipartisan concerns about our current system. According to the poll, more than four out of five Americans say money plays too great a role in political campaigns. Two-thirds say that the wealthy have more of a chance to influence the electoral process than other Americans. The perception is that politicians are corrupted by big money interests . . . and whether that is true or not, that perception and the loss of trust that goes with it make it very difficult for Congress to solve tough issues.

This problem—the perception of pervasive corruption—is undermining our

democracy, and we must address it. Everyone is entitled to a seat at the table, but wealthy donors and big corporations shouldn't be able to buy every seat.

The Fair Elections Now Act will reform our campaign finance system so that members of Congress can focus on implementing policies in the best interest of the people who elected them—not just the wealthy donors and special interests that bankrolled their success. I urge my colleagues and the American people to support this important legislation.

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#### RECOGNIZING THE 90TH BIRTHDAY OF LESTER CROWN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I recognize the 90th birthday of one of the outstanding business leaders of our time—Chicago businessman, Lester Crown.

Lester Crown was born on June 7, 1925, to Henry Crown, the son of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, and his wife, Rebecca Kranz. Like many other Illinoisans, Lester came from a family of Lithuanian immigrants with humble beginnings who moved to America to pursue a better life for their children.

Lester's father worked hard with his two brothers to build their family construction supplies company, the Material Service Corporation. As a young man, Lester worked with his father at the Material Service's quarry over the summers to lend a hand. Through the hard work and dedication of the entire Crown family, the Material Service Corporation became one of the most successful companies in America. Several years later, that family business merged with General Dynamics Corporation to become America's largest defense contractor.

From the start, Lester saw his father's work and learned what it took to be a successful businessman. He used his experience to excel and quickly became the president of Marblehead Lime and Royal Crown (RC) Cola. After years of managing companies, Lester took over as chair of General Dynamics and as the head of the family investment firm.

One of Lester's many talents has been his ability to recognize great potential. His eye for promising investments has led him to grace the Forbes 400 list every year since 1982. With a quick glance at his impressive list of investments we can easily see why—he is a major shareholder in Maytag, Hilton Hotels, Alltel, Aspen Skiing Company, New York's Rockefeller Center, the New York Yankees, and Illinois' very own Chicago Bulls.

But Lester is not just a successful businessman, he is also a dedicated philanthropist, husband, and father. He has channeled his successes to provide generous contributions to a wide array of local and national projects. His charitable footprint can be seen in landmarks such as the famous Crown Fountain in Millennium Park, the Lyric

Opera of Chicago, Stroger Hospital, and in universities across the Nation.

Lester and his wife Renee have been happily married for more than 60 years and have seven children. Renee serves as a founding member and former president of the Women's Board of Northwestern University and a life director of the Multiple Sclerosis Society. She also serves on the board of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, the Field Museum, the Joffrey Ballet, and as an honorary chair of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

Lester and Renee are an inspiration for many in their family who have become successful investors and philanthropists. Their son Jim is continuing the legacy started by Lester's father nearly a century ago by now serving as the lead director of General Dynamics. Together, the Crown family works with roughly 600 groups a year and donates millions of dollars annually to support organizations that focus on education and community development.

In addition to the energy Lester has poured into his family and business life, he has been a pillar in the Jewish-American community in his support of Israel. Few can match his dedicated commitment to the survival and success of the nation of Israel.

While few share Lester's long list of business achievements, even fewer share his level of leadership and generosity. It is with great pride that I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the 90th birthday of Lester Crown and to congratulate him on his legendary career and his many contributions to the city of Chicago, the Nation, and the world. I offer my best wishes as he continues to provide visionary leadership through his business endeavors and family philanthropy for years to come.

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#### CONFIRMATION OF ERIC MILLER TO BE VERMONT'S U.S. ATTORNEY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last night, the Senate confirmed Eric Miller to be Vermont's 37th U.S. attorney. I am confident that he will do an outstanding job as the top Federal law enforcement officer in the State. Before recommending Eric to the President, I consulted prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, law enforcement officials, and civic leaders throughout Vermont. They were unanimous in their support for Eric. I was particularly impressed with his thoughtfulness, vision, and depth of experience. Eric Miller is one of Vermont's leading trial attorneys. He is well regarded by State and local law enforcement and leaders in Vermont's legal community.

Eric Miller has worked since 1999 in the Burlington office of the law firm Sheehey Furlong & Behm PC, serving as partner since 2002. He has litigated a range of complex issues in Federal civil and criminal cases, including trials and appeals. As an appointee to the Criminal Justice Act panel of the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont,