

as it celebrates its 25th anniversary of the first open heart surgery in the hospital's Cardiac Center. Located in my hometown of St. Helena in the Napa Valley, St. Helena Hospital is one of the country's premier medical facilities. But I don't say that just because this is the hospital where my mother, my father, one of my sons and I were born and where my wife, Janet, worked as a nurse in the Intensive Care Unit.

The St. Helena Hospital has an outstanding cardiac care facility. It began in May of 1974, when Wilfred Tam, M.D. performed the North Bay's first open-heart surgery at St. Helena Hospital. This made St. Helena Hospital one of the first community hospitals to perform the procedure. The surgery was just one in a series of firsts in the region for the hospital's Cardiac Center, which opened in 1972. Today, St. Helena Hospital's Cardiac surgery team has more than 68 years of combined surgical experience and has performed more than 15,000 open-heart surgeries.

Recognized as a pioneer and a leader in cardiac care, St. Helena Hospital has continued its tradition of high-tech innovation. In 1997, it was the nation's first hospital to purchase the Medtronic Octopus, a device that immobilizes the beating heart during minimally invasive bypass surgery.

Installed in 1993, St. Helena Hospital's digital by-plane cardiovascular catheterization suite was the first of its kind in the United States. Work is scheduled to begin this year to upgrade the hospital's other suite with new, state-of-the-art equipment.

To celebrate its quarter-century of excellence in cardiac care, St. Helena Hospital is hosting a community celebration on September 26, 1999 honoring the physicians and staff who make the Cardiac Center a leader in heart health, and also honoring the "Mended Hearts" for whom they have cared over the years.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate at this time that we acknowledge and honor the St. Helena Hospital Cardiac Center for its outstanding Cardiac Center and for its tremendous twenty-five year commitment to providing the very best in quality health care.

DRUG INTERDICTION OR DRUG SMUGGLING?

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend to you the attached article from earlier this summer written by Mr. Frank Calzon, entitled "Behind Castro: Money laundering, drug smuggling." Mr. Calzon is the executive director of the Center for a Free Cuba in Washington, D.C. and is a tireless fighter for democratic causes. I encourage my colleagues to learn from his insightful article.

BEHIND CASTRO: MONEY LAUNDERING, DRUG SMUGGLING

State Department and Coast Guard officials last week flew to Havana seeking "to improve U.S.-Cuban cooperation on drug interdiction."

If the Clinton administration would look to history, it would have known that it was a vain mission and would set about probing instead the relationship between Colombia's drug trade and the guerrilla movements over which Fidel Castro exercises inordinate influence.

Havana complains that it lacks resources to combat drug trafficking. But, even if one accepts this at face value, it is unclear how the United States should respond. Should we provide resources to the Cuban Ministry of the Interior—Havana's KGB-Gestapo? Do it while holding in federal custody Cuban spies charged with gathering information about military bases in Florida and linked to the shootdown of the Brothers to the Rescue pilots?

Havana has managed to purchase state-of-the-art radio-jamming equipment and foot the bill for thousands of foreigners to visit the island and condemn the U.S. embargo. Could it be that inadequate funding for drug interdiction is simply the result of Castro's misguided priorities?

In 1982 a federal grand jury indicted four high-ranking Cuban government officials, including a vice admiral of the Cuban navy and a former Cuban ambassador to Colombia. They were charged with facilitating the smuggling of drugs into the United States.

In 1983 then-President Ronald Reagan said that there was "strong evidence" of drug smuggling by high-level Cuban government officials. And in 1989 Castro executed several Ministry of the Interior officials and Cuba's most decorated army officer, Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa, allegedly involved in the drug trade. Castro did so after years of suggesting that U.S. accusations of drug smuggling were lies "concocted by the CIA." He has never explained how widespread Cuba's involvement with narcotrafficking was then or how a military and national hero such as Ochoa, with no oversight over Cuba's harbors or airspace, could have been involved.

Then there is the mystery of how several hundred million dollars appeared in the coffers of Cuba's National Bank. Castro's American supporters assert that \$800 million is sent by the Cuban-American community every year to relatives. However, given the relatively small number of Cuban-American households who still have relatives in Cuba, it is mathematically impossible for that community to generate such funds. The amount is approximately equivalent to the income Cubans derived in 1997-98 from its main export: sugar. Money laundering and drug smuggling are the logical sources of this mysterious income.

It should be noted that, despite major narcotics charges brought against Ochoa and the other Interior Ministry officers, no accounting was ever presented of what should have been multimillion-dollar payoffs.

Claims of Castro's cooperation with U.S. anti-narcotics efforts are a rerun of the Noriega saga. Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega currently is serving a long, federal sentence for his role in the drug trade. He had extensive ties to the Cuban dictator. Evidence was presented at his trial that Castro once mediated a dispute between Noriega and the Medellin drug cartel.

Nevertheless, Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, the Clinton administration's drug czar, recently said that there is "no conclusive evidence to indicate that the Cuban leadership is currently involved in this criminal activity." The general seems to be unaware of a report released by his own office in March, titled "1998 Annual Assessment of Cocaine Move-

ment." It states: "Noncommercial air movements from Colombia to the Bahamas were most prolific in 1998. Most flights fly either east or west of Jamaica, and subsequently fly over Cuban land mass." It adds that the cocaine flown over Cuban territory is dropped "in or near Cuban territorial waters."

Given Castro's sensitivity concerning unidentified aircraft flying over Cuba, as evidenced by the Brothers to the Rescue shootdown, it is inexplicable that not one drug-smuggling airplane has ever been shot down over the island.

There are those who believe that the Cuban leopard has changed his spots. Maybe. But the consequences of taking Castro at his word can be tragic. The impact of the drug epidemic on America's youth is far too important to allow the facts linking Castro to the drug trade to be swept under the rug.

BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 417) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to reform the financing of campaigns for elections for Federal office, and for other purposes:

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Shays-Meehan Campaign Finance Reform Act and urge my colleagues to vote against all "poison pill" amendments that will be offered today. I am proud to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation, which represents the best, real opportunity to reform our broken campaign finance system.

The issue of campaign finance reform cuts to the essence of democracy. Our unique American political system will not survive without the participation of the average American citizen. Unfortunately, more and more Americans are dropping out—with each election, fewer Americans are voting. They are doing so because they no longer believe that their vote matters. As they see more and more money pouring into campaigns, they believe that their voice is being drowned out by wealthy special interests.

Despite the cynicism of the American public, Congress has failed to enact significant campaign finance reform legislation since 1974. In that year, in the wake of the Watergate Scandal, Congress imposed tough spending limits on direct, "hard money" contributions to candidates. Unfortunately, no one at that time foresaw how two loopholes in the law would lead to a gross corruption of our political system.

The first loophole is "soft" money—the unregulated and unlimited contributions to the political parties from corporations, labor unions, or wealthy individuals. "Soft" money allows wealthy special interests to skirt around "hard" money limits and dump unlimited sums of money into a campaign.

During the 1996 election cycle, approximately 30 percent of all large federal contributions came in the form of soft money to political parties. Both parties raised soft money at a 75 percent higher rate than four years ago. For the 2000 elections, it is estimated that soft money spending will exceed \$500 million—more than double the total for the 1996 elections.

Soft money is used to finance the second loophole in campaign finance law: sham issue advertisements. This loophole allows special interests to spend huge sums of money on campaign ads advocating either the defeat or election of a candidate. As long as these ads do not use the magic words “vote for” or “vote against” they are deemed “issue advocacy” under current law and therefore not subject to campaign spending limits or disclosure requirements.

During the 1996 elections, the television and radio airwaves were flooded with these sham issue ads—many of which were negative attack ads. Americans who see or here these ads have no idea who pays for them because no disclosure is required. They drown out the voice of the average American citizen, and even sometimes of the candidates themselves. Without reform, we can certainly expect a huge increase in these sham issue ads.

The Shays-Meehan bill begins to restore public confidence in our electoral system by closing these two egregious loopholes. The bill bans all contributions of soft money to federal campaigns. Specifically, it bans national party committees from soliciting, receiving, directing or spending soft money. The bill also prohibits state and local parties from spending soft money on federal election activity.

In an effort to ban campaign advertisements that masquerade as “issue advocacy,” Shays-Meehan tightens the definition of “express advocacy” communications. Under the bill, any ad that is clearly designed to influence an election is deemed “express advocacy” and must therefore abide by federal contribution and expenditure limits and disclosure requirements. Shays-Meehan includes well crafted language that specifically exempts legitimate voter guides from the definition of “express advocacy.”

The Shays-Meehan bill would not prevent public organizations from running advertisements, but it would ensure that ads clearly designed to influence an election are regulated under federal law. We have laws clearly designed to regulate and disclose campaign donations and expenditures, and no one should be allowed to evade them. Shays-Meehan would ensure that everyone involved in influencing elections plays by the same rules.

Opponents have argued that the Shays-Meehan bill undermines the First Amendment right of free speech. However, the Supreme Court has ruled that Congress has a broad ability to protect the political process from corruption and the appearance of corruption. It has upheld as constitutional the ability to limit contributions by individuals and political committees to candidates. The Supreme Court has also clearly permitted Congress to distinguish between issue advocacy on the one hand, and electioneering or “express advocacy” on the other.

The Meehan-Shays proposal will not cure our campaign finance system of all its evils—

and I certainly support more far reaching restrictions on campaign contributions and expenditures. However, the bill will take a modest but significant first step toward restoring integrity in our political system. It will limit the influence of wealthy special interests and help to restore the voice of average American citizens in our political process. In short, enactment of this legislation is essential to the survival of American democracy.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT ON
H.R. 2756, “FAIR COMPETITION IN
TAX-EXEMPT FINANCING ACT OF
1999”

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in August I introduced H.R. 2756, the “Fair Competition in Tax-Exempt Financing Act of 1999”, which has been referred to the Ways and Means Committee. As a general proposition I believe that governments should be cautious in their use of tax-exempt financing, particularly when it is used to provide services that can be obtained through the private sector.

Since I introduced the bill, I have learned that it may raise significant issues that could affect the tax-exempt bonds of municipal electric systems. It was certainly not my intent to do anything that would affect the ongoing debate on the private use restrictions on these tax-exempt bonds.

As the Ranking Minority Member of the Energy and Power Subcommittee of the Commerce Committee, which has electric restructuring legislation pending before it, I believe it is prudent that I remain neutral on this issue. In fact I have encouraged the investor-owned utilities and public power systems to reach an agreement on private use and offer it to the Congress as a solution to this important restructuring issue.

Mr. Speaker, in order to make my intentions completely clear, were I permitted to withdraw the bill, I would do so. However, the custom in the House is not to permit bills to be withdrawn. As a result of the information I have received and the concerns that have been expressed since the introduction of the bill, I have decided not to seek further action on this legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARILYN
PRICE BIRNHAK AND J. ROBERT
BIRNHAK ON 35 YEARS OF SERVICE
AND LEADERSHIP TO THE
GREATER PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY

HON. JOSEPH M. HOEFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. J. Robert Birnhak for being honored at the 35th anniversary celebration of Weight Watchers of Phila-

delphia on Saturday, September 18, 1999. Marilyn Price Birnhak along with the support of her husband J. Robert Birnhak founded Weight Watchers of Philadelphia thirty-five years ago. As founder and first president, she watched her group of eight members grow to roughly 20,000 members over the years, meeting in towns throughout the southeastern Pennsylvania and southwestern New Jersey areas.

Mr. and Mrs. Birnhak have also instilled in their children a sense of leadership, as their son John currently serves as the company's vice president of finance and their daughter Tracey is vice president of marketing and business development. All of their children are active in their communities.

The Birnhak family has contributed to Weight Watchers' tremendous growth in the Philadelphia area, as well as in the broader reaches of the franchise. Mr. Birnhak served as a past president of the Weight Watchers Franchise Association, and Mrs. Birnhak served first as vice president and then as president of the association.

In addition to their commitment to Weight Watchers, the Birnhaks have been leaders in the larger community as well. Mr. Birnhak has been active on the board of the Philadelphia Geriatric Center and Congregation Beth Shalom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Both he and Mrs. Birnhak have been honored by the State of Israel Bonds, Jewish Theological Seminary and Ben Gurion University in Israel. Mrs. Birnhak is also on the board of directors of the Philadelphia Theatre Company.

Mrs. Birnhak has contributed significantly to numerous health panels, seminars and health fairs. She has lectured at medical colleges and universities and appeared on radio and television talk shows.

Through Weight Watchers the Birnhaks have participated in a myriad of charitable endeavors for the United Way, the American Heart Association, the March of Dimes, the Alzheimer's Association, the Hero Scholarship Fund, Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, Inc. Feeds the Hungry, the Kidney Foundation, among others. In particular, Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, Inc. is to be commended for being the single largest contributor to the Philadelphia Hero Scholarship Fund.

Once again, my congratulations to a wonderful couple and their family.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RICK LAZIO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, because I was unavoidably detained, I was absent for the vote on the Bereuter/Wicker amendment to H.R. 417. This amendment would prohibit campaign contributions to federal candidates from any individual other than a U.S. citizen or national. Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of the Bereuter amendment in part because it would have been consistent with my record. On July 14, 1998, I voted for a similar amendment offered by Representative VITO FOSSELLA (vote #276 of the Second Session