

THE SHAYS-MEEHAN CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM BILL IS AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD

(Mr. SANDERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill, and urge the Speaker to allow this important piece of legislation to get onto the floor for debate and a vote.

Shays-Meehan, which will stop large corporations and wealthy individuals from pouring hundreds of millions of dollars in soft money into both political parties, will not solve the crisis of campaign financing that we face today, but is an important step forward.

Mr. Speaker, one of the great tragedies of our time is that the American people are in large numbers giving up on the political process. In the last election, only 36 percent of the people voted, and tens of millions no longer believe that this Congress represents their interests. Rather, they believe, not without justification, that big money interests, through campaign contributions and lobbying efforts, develop the agenda here and call the tunes.

Mr. Speaker, let us tell the middle class and the working families of this country, the folks who do not contribute hundreds of millions, that we are listening to them. Let us pass campaign finance reform.

RECOGNIZING LIEUTENANT COLONEL MANUEL FERNANDEZ, JR., UPON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Fernandez, Jr., upon his retirement from the United States Air Force after 22 years of distinguished service to our great Nation. An American hero, a decorated military aviator, Lieutenant Colonel Fernandez has served with distinction, including service as a squadron commander at several locations worldwide.

Most recently he served with honor and great distinction to the United States Congress as the deputy chief of the House Liaison Office. In this position Manny, who is known to his friend as Manny, excelled at providing information and service to Members of the House of Representatives. His intelligence, his charm, keen wit, and a can-do attitude made Manny Fernandez a pleasure to work with.

Because of Manny's credibility and good will, the Air Force and the Department of Defense will long reap the benefits of his tenure here on Capitol Hill.

On behalf of my colleagues, I wish Lieutenant Colonel Manny Fernandez and his wife, Susan, the very best as he enters retirement.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mrs. NAPOLITANO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues today to support the campaign finance reform and the filing of this discharge petition. I am proud that my signature will be among the 218 needed to bring H.R. 417, the bipartisan campaign finance reform measure offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), and other measures as well, to the floor for a vote.

For me as a new Member of this House, this is a truly defining issue. The money chase must end so we, as servants of the people, can spend our time doing the people's business. I believe that it is what our constituents want from us. It is certainly what I would prefer to do.

Nine out of 10 Americans support campaign reform. Let them know we are listening to them. Now is the time to move forward. No more delays, no more bickering, no more excuses, just let us vote.

LET US SUPPORT NEEDED RESEARCH ON RETINAL DEGENERATIVE DISEASES

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, there is a saying, nothing is so strong as gentleness, and nothing is so gentle as real strength.

I can think of no better person who personifies those words as does my constituent and friend, Betti Lidsky. Yesterday, before the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Betti testified about her experiences as the mother of three children, Ilana, Daria, and Isaac, who are stricken with retinal degenerative diseases.

Betti and Carlos, her husband, came to deliver a message that is not only close to their hearts, but close to the hearts of the millions of family members across America who have a loved one who suffers from this disease, for which there is no treatment nor cure.

Let us help give the Lidsky family and indeed those families across America who are impacted by this disease hope by supporting, promoting, and funding research through the National Eye Institute and the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Working together, there is a cure in sight.

URGING MEMBERS TO SIGN THE DISCHARGE PETITION TO ALLOW DEBATE ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mr. DINGELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, there is a line forming down here in the well. Its purpose is to provide a discharge petition which will put on the Floor a fair proposal which will make it possible for this House to vote and to work its will on a piece of legislation to reform one of the great scandals in this country. I am talking about excessive expenditures in campaigns.

It will for the first time in years make a meaningful reform in terms of how money is spent and how much money is spent. It is something which will attack a problem that has been corroding the confidence of the American people in their government.

I urge all of my colleagues on both sides to join together in signing this discharge petition, putting on the Floor of the House a piece of legislation which will enable the people to return their confidence to their government, because we will be eliminating one of the great abuses, excessive expenditures of money on public elections, something which is corrupting the public business of this Nation.

I commend the framers of the discharge petition, I join in signing it, and I urge all of my colleagues to do likewise.

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BUDGET RESOLUTION

(Mr. EWING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I come here to speak about the budget, but I cannot help but respond a little bit on campaign finance reform.

The issue should be how do we make those in office live by the rules that are already on the books. I question whether more laws, more rules will make people any more honest.

But we are here at a proud time, to think that we are going to pass the budget resolution on time today. I ask my colleagues on that side of the aisle, do not throw up roadblocks. Come along. Let us do the budget resolution as the law requires by the 15th.

It has got some great things in it. It strengthens Social Security. It keeps the caps so that we keep our commitment to balance the budget. It provides money to help make Medicare more secure. Education will benefit under this budget resolution. I only see one dark cloud.

Vote yes on the budget resolution. It is a good agreement.