

The Senator from Iowa is correct; under his amendment there would be no taxpayer funding provided you complied with the Government speech limit. The problem is, if you do not, your complying opponent gets tax dollars from the Government to counter your excessive speech. That is the constitutional problem with the proposal of the Senator from Iowa.

I do not think that makes the spending limit voluntary if, when you encroach above the Government-prescribed speech limit, the Government subsidizes your opponent. That is more than a hammer, that is a sledgehammer.

Also, it is worthy to note that all of the challengers who won last year, as far as I can tell—and the Senator from Iowa can correct me if I am wrong—I believe all the challengers who won last year spent more than the spending limits in his amendment, further proving my point that a challenger needs the freedom to reach the audience. To the extent we are drawing the rules, crafting this in such a way that we make it very difficult for the challenger to compete, we are going to win even more of the time. Of course, incumbents do win most of the time, but we would win more of the time if we had a very low ceiling.

In any event, my view is this is clearly unconstitutional. It is taxpayer funding of elections, more unpopular than a congressional pay raise, widely voted against every April 15 by the taxpayers of this country.

We have had this vote in a slightly different way on two earlier occasions. The Wellstone amendment got 36 votes; the Kerry amendment got 30. I hope the amendment of the Senator from Iowa will be roundly defeated.

I do applaud him, however, for recognizing the importance of nonseverability clauses in campaign finance debates.

---

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have 10 unanimous consent requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have all been approved by the majority and minority leaders. I ask that these requests be agreed to en bloc and printed in the RECORD.

Mr. DODD. Reserving the right to object, I ask my friend and colleague if he will withhold that request for a few minutes. I will share with him a message I am getting. I will let him know about it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DODD. At this juncture, at this particular moment.

#### BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT OF 2001—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 155

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I saw my colleague from Minnesota, but I guess he is not now on the floor. We have a couple minutes. My colleague from Kentucky and I talked about this the other day. He makes a very good point about the declining participation in the checkoff system. In fact, the dollar amounts have been raised. If my friend from Kentucky is correct, originally it was \$1 for the checkoff. You are not paying more in taxes. It is the money you send in. The checkoff of \$1 of your tax returns would be used for the public financing of Presidential races. That number then went up to \$3 because there were fewer and fewer people who were actually doing the voluntary checkoff.

His numbers, I believe, are correct. We have seen a decline in the number of people who are voluntarily checking off that \$3 of their Federal taxes they are sending in or that are being withheld to be used for these Presidential races.

I am worried about that because I think there is an underlying cause for this. The debate we are having about campaign finance reform, while we are not going to adopt public financing for congressional races despite the fact there is a lot of merit going that route in terms of dealing with the constitutional problems that exist in the absence of having some public financing, there is an underlying reason that I think contributes to that declining statistic, and that is the people are disgusted with the whole process.

I do not think it is people's lack of patriotism or their lack of understanding how important it is to contribute to strengthening our democracy. People are getting fed up. Witness that last year despite the overwhelming amount of attention and advertising on a national Presidential race, a race that included Ralph Nader and the Green Party, there was Pat Buchanan and the Reform Party, the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, and his running mate from my home State, JOE LIEBERMAN; President Bush and RICHARD CHENEY. Out of 200 million eligible voters in this country, only 100 million participated. One out of every two eligible voters in this country decided they were not going to make a choice for President of the United States and Vice President, not to mention the congressional races, the Senate races, and gubernatorial races that occurred.

On the Federal election for the leader of the oldest continuous democracy in the world, one out of every two adults in this country said they were not going to participate. I know some may have had legitimate excuses, but I suspect a significant majority of those who did not participate knew it was

election day, did not have some overriding family matter that caused them to miss voting. I think they made a conscious decision not to vote. I think they decided they were not going to show up, and I cannot express in our native language adequately the deep, deep concern I have over that fact and what appears to be a growing number of people.

I hear it particularly among younger people. I visit a lot of high schools in my home State of Connecticut. I get a sense that too many of our younger people are embracing the notions held by one out of every two adult Americans in the last election, that they are not going to participate by showing up to choose the leader of our country. I suspect that a good part of the reason is that people are just disgusted by what they see and how elections are run when they see this mindless advertising, these 30-second spots, the attack ads that go after each other as if this was somehow an athletic contest rather than a debate of ideas where we are talking about the future of our country and what the priorities of a nation ought to be.

I, too, am very concerned with the declining statistics that my friend from Kentucky has identified, but I think it is more a poll not about public financing, I think it is a poll we ought to pay attention to, what the American people are saying, at least in the majority of cases, I believe: We think the system is not working very well. We think the system is out of control. We think there is too much money in politics; that our voices do not get heard; that we cannot afford to participate in these contests where contributions of \$1,000, now \$2,000 per individual, that people can write a check now for \$37,500 if this McCain-Feingold bill is adopted.

Last year—I said this over and over in the past week and a half—there were only 1,200 people in this country who wrote the maximum check of \$25,000; 1,200 people out of 280 million Americans. We now have raised that because this hasn't been enough. We are told you can't finance these campaigns with maximum contributions of \$25,000 in Federal elections. We are raising it to \$37,500. That is per individual, per year. Double that for a primary election. That gets you to \$75,000. Of course, if it is a husband and wife, it is \$150,000. We had to debate that. I commend my colleague from California who negotiated that number down.

Those who wanted that number higher wanted \$100,000 per individual, \$200,000 for a husband and wife. We are told the system is financially bankrupt. We don't have enough money in politics, we are told.

That has more to do with these declining numbers of people voluntarily checking off for some of their tax dollars to be used to publicly finance the Presidential races in America. I am