CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

July 12, 2001

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, continuing to reserve my right to object, I would ask a question if I may, and I see that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, let me say it is obvious that we very much, in a bipartisan way, want to move ahead with campaign finance reform. My friend and I discussed this late last night in the Committee on Rules, and we fashioned a rule and it is quite possible that we could, as we have discussed with the side of the gentleman, propose a modification to the rule. As we work on that unanimous consent request which has just been proposed by the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS), it is so that we might continue an interesting discussion on the issue of campaign finance reform and, during that time, ensure that we have a package put into place that will allow us to proceed with a full and fair and vigorous debate, the debate that we will have the balance of my time.
changes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEK) and to their own House. It provides an opportunity for an amendment of the Ney-Wynn bill, the Doolett bill and the Linder bill, along with numerous other amendments of Members who appeared before the Committee unattributed. It is a fair rule, one that allows for a balanced debate on this very important legislation. This will bring about, once and for all, a great debate, a debate that the entire House can participate in. The rule that is provided for debate; if it is voted down, it is for those who opposed it to live for another day to demagouge it, rather than vote on it.

Mr. DALL on behalf of New Mexico, Mr. Speaker, the 1996 election cycle. We must take action now. The 2000 presidential election, therefore, should direct our attention once again to the need for campaign and electoral reform. Both political parties are motivated to address the issue in this 107th session of the Congress. I have already cosponsored legislation to provide states with the tools they need to ensure uniformity and improve voter accuracy and access. We must be careful, however, not to let our efforts to achieve voting reform mask the critical problem with our electoral process—the uncontrolled and pervasive influence of big money on the outcome of our elections. So, today, I rise in strong support of the Shays-Meehan legislation, which will help fix many of our system's problems.

It is time for Congress to enact campaign finance reform because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, our current campaign finance system is broken. Last year, both parties spent unprecedented amounts in soft money for a new record in the campaigns for control of the White House and Congress. New Mexicans—like all Americans—are justifiably appalled by the fact that the amount of money spent in elections has increased exponentially with no end in sight. The Democratic and Republican national party committees raised a record $463 million in soft money from January 1, 1999 through December 31, 2000, according to a Common Cause analysis released in February. The amount raised during this past election cycle was nearly double the $235.9 million raised during the 1995–1996 election cycle. We must take action now. In the 106th Congress, and again in the 107th, I was elected by my colleagues to take a leadership role on the issue of campaign finance reform in the House of Representatives. In September 1999, I helped floor manage the House's passage of the Shays-Meehan legislation which would have closed some of the worst campaign finance loopholes. However, this bill never became law because of the opposition of a single Senator.

In spite of this setback, a bipartisan group, led by JOHN MCCAIN and RUSSELL FEINGOLD, have passed their legislation in the other body. It is my hope that, this year, the House will follow suit, and pass meaningful campaign finance reform legislation and that the President will sign it into law.

Current law authorizes contributions by individuals of up to $1,000 per candidate per election and up to $5,000 per Political Action Committee (PAC) per election. Corporations and unions are prohibited from making any contributions to candidates or their campaigns. Nevertheless, individuals, unions, and corporations give contributions of hundreds of thousands of dollars, indeed, millions to campaigns as so-called "soft" money to the political parties themselves. The soft money loophole is based on the fiction that a contribution to the Democratic party or the Republican party is different in reality from a contribution to the party's candidates. It is fiction because parties spend most of the contributions on television campaigns and those campaigns have one goal—electing candidates. Banning unregulated, unlimited contributions to parties is the core of campaign finance reform.

Campaign finance reform is vital to every piece of legislation that Congress considers. From the need for a patient bill of rights to the acute need for a comprehensive national energy policy, to the need for a Medicare prescription drug benefit to education reform, the people's voices should be heard and not drowned out by big money. Vested interests have too often been able to exert influence in Congress and White House through the soft money loophole.

Mr. Speaker, campaign finance reform is the most important step Congress can take to restore citizens' belief in our democratic process. What better motivation for reform than the egregious excesses of the 2000 election—both in voter access and in campaign contributions? We must act before the 2002 election, before the abuses of the electoral process have so distorted the democratic ideal that we are no longer truly a "government of the people, by the people and for the people." I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill. The time is now for real campaign finance reform. Passage of the Shays-Meehan legislation is the only true way to achieve that goal.

Mr. BALDacci. Mr. Speaker, I am outraged by the unprecedented rule that has been developed for consideration of the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform legislation. I have never before seen a rule that divides a Manager's Amendment into 14 separate provisions and requires each of them to be passed individually. The Republican Leadership has really outdone themselves this time in finding new and creative ways to thwart the will of the American people.

Since first being elected to office, I have strongly supported meaningful campaign finance reform. I was so hopeful last year when the House passed Shays-Meehan by an overwhelming vote—only to see it die in the Senate.

This year, we were hopeful again. The Senate has passed McCain-Feingold. The House Leadership is committed to allowing a vote on Shays-Meehan.

But the Republican Leadership is still trying to pull the rug from under reform again. The Republican Leadership's rule is designed to make it as difficult as possible for Shays-Meehan to pass in the form its sponsors recommend.

If the Rule is defeated, as I believe it should be, the Leadership should rest assured that supporters of campaign finance reform will not go quietly. The American people have said time and again that they want to see our campaign finance system cleaned up in a meaningful way. Defeating this rule will not defeat this issue. We will be back, and Shays-Meehan will ultimately pass this body.

Americans have lost all confidence in the campaign finance system. Rules like this may cause them to lose all confidence in the U.S. Congress. I urge my colleagues to defeat this rule and to demand that Shays-Meehan be brought back under a fair rule so that we can do the will of the American people and start the process of restoring the faith of the American people in their government.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes had it.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 203, nays 228, not voting 3, as follows:

[Roll No. 228]
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

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NAYS—228

Abercrombie  Farr  Maloney (NY)
Ackerman  Fattah  Markley
Allen  Filner  Masek
Andrews  Ford  Matz
Baca  Frank  Mauer
Baer  Frost  McCarthy (MO)
Baldacci  Ganzkie  McCarthy (NY)
Baldwin  Gephardt  McCollum
Barrica  Geomalis  McCormick
Barrett  Gordon  McGovern
Becerra  Graham  McIntyre
BentSEN  Gutierrez  McNulty
Berkeley  Hall (OH)  Meek
Berman  Hall (TX)  Meeks (FL)
Berry  Harman  Meeks (NY)
Bishop  Hawkins (FL)  Menendez
Blagaiojevic  Hill  Millender
Blumenauer  Hilliard  McDonald
Boehlert  Hinckley  Miller, George
Bonior  Hinojosa  Miller, James
Borinski  Hoeft  Mollohan
Bowser  Holden  Moran (VA)
Boucher  Holt  Morella
Boyd  Honda  Murtha
Brady (PA)  Hooley  Nadler
Brown (FL)  Houghton  Napolitano
Brown (OH)  Hoyer  Neal
Capps  Inslee  Oberstar
Capuano  Inskeep  Obey
Cardin (MD)  Jackson (IL)  Oberstar
Carson (OK) (TX)  Owens
Castle  Jefferson  Pallone
Clay  John  Pascrell
Clayton  Johnson (CT)  Pastor
Clyburn  Jones (OH)  Pelosi
Condit  Kanjzarski  Peterson (MN)
Cunyers  Kaptur  Perri
Costello  Kennedy (RI)  Phelps
Coyne  Kildee  Pomeroy
Cramer  Kilpatrick  Price (NC)
Crowley  Kind (WI)  Rahall
Cummins  Kicewich  Rahall
Davis (CA)  Kucinich  Reyes
Davis (FL)  Lawrence  Rivers
Davis (IL)  Lammens  Rodriguez
DeFazio  Langevin  Rohner
DeFede  Langevin  Rohner
DeLaunay  Larsen (WA)  Rothman
DeLauro  Larson (CT)  Roukema
Deutsch  Leach  Roybal-Allard
Dicks  Lee  Rush
Dingell  Levin  Sabo
Doggett  Langevin (GA)  Saavedra
Dooley  Lisinski  Sanders
Dorgan  LoBiondo  Sandlin
Edwards  Lowery  Scarborough
Ehlers  LoBiondo (KY)  Schakowsky
ErieRider  Lothier  Schiffer
Evans  Maloney (CT)  Scott

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to inquire of the gentleman from Missouri the schedule for the remainder of the week and for next week.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Michigan, for yielding.

We have now finished the legislative business for this week. We will have a pro forma session on Monday. On Tuesday, the House meets at 10 a.m. We have votes scheduled beginning as early as noon.

The flag-burning constitutional amendment will be on Tuesday; Commerce-State-Justice appropriations on Tuesday; then the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act.

Then the balance of the week we will finish Commerce-State-Justice; Foreign Operations appropriations; charitable choice; and hope to have a patients’ bill of rights on the floor the balance of the week next week.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, if I may inquire further of the gentleman, it is a pretty heavy schedule, the Patients’ Bill of Rights, charitable choice, as I understand it.

May I ask the gentleman from Missouri when he expects that the campaign finance bill will come back to the floor? We have a majority, a bipartisan majority in this body who wanted a more fair rule. We hope that the Republican majority will bring another rule that is more equitable, more fair, that recollects the vote that we just had.

I would like to inquire when that might happen.

Mr. BLUNT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, we expected, of course, to have the campaign finance bill on the floor tonight. That bill will not be on the floor because of the defeat of the rule, and I think we will just have to look at the vote today and the structure of that rule and see when and if that bill can come back to the floor.

Mr. BONIOR. So is the gentleman telling us that it may not come back to the floor of the House?

Mr. BLUNT. I am not saying that. I have not had time to calculate this. We really thought we were going to win this rule and vote on this tonight. We thought it was a fair rule, an equitable rule that clearly gave all options. Apparently, the majority did not think that, and I have no further information.

Mr. BONIOR. Let me ask the gentleman when he expects to bring the Patient’s Bill of Rights to the floor; at what point next week?

Mr. BLUNT. We do not know yet, but we are hopeful that that bill could be on the floor next week. We think it would be mid to late in the week. If we get it to the floor, but we are hoping that that is one of the things that will come to the floor next week. It is an important issue; needs to be debated and moved forward. We hope we can start and maybe complete that process next week.

Mr. BONIOR. And do we know under what procedure the Patient’s Bill of Rights may be brought to the floor next week?

Mr. BLUNT. I am unaware of any procedural decisions that have been made on that.

Mr. BONIOR. On the question of the faith-based initiatives, is that a probable, a maybe, or a most likely next week?

Mr. BLUNT. I think it is most likely that that bill will come out of the Committee on Ways and Means and to the floor next week.

Mr. BONIOR. And if I might ask one other question of my friend from Missouri, what other appropriation bills