

Mr. Chairman, if a modern day Rip Van Winkle tuned in today after napping for 25 years, who could fault him for immediately tuning out this debate on campaign finance reform? In 1971 and 1974 Congress passed campaign finance reforms that limited the amount of money in politics and, for the first time, required candidates to disclose the source of their money. The wisdom and application of those reform efforts have been debated by Congress ever since--annually, emotionally, and with futility.

So, for the last 25 years, Congressional campaigns have been conducted under a set of rules that have become unenforceable (through systematic defunding of the Federal Elections Commission), weakened (by court decisions), and yet located at the heart of the American distrust with elected officials. The Harris Poll showed us earlier this year that 85 percent of Americans believe special interests have more influence than voters on this institution. Who can fault them when total campaign spending has risen from \$115 million in 1975, to \$450 million in 1985, and almost certainly to over \$1 billion in this election? Is it any wonder that voter turnout is at an all-time low, and that respect for Members of this institution seems to rise only when we are not in session?

In my relatively short time in Congress, I have seen how campaigns are financed, and how that distorts the decision making process. We would not have nearly the number of people who die each year from tobacco related deaths if it weren't for the influence of tobacco money in politics. I see negative ads from anonymous sources tearing at the fabric of our society. I see honest men and women trying to buck a system that distorts and creates negative consequences. And I see my colleagues, including Mr. Allen, Mr. Shays, Mr. Meehan and others, devoting enormous time and creativity to meaningful reforms that don't tilt in favor of Republicans or Democrats, don't unduly help incumbents, but does cut down the pursuit of campaign money.

We now know how cynically the deck has been stacked yet again against reform. Those who look at the current system and see nothing wrong have a rule that permits them to call up 258 non-germane amendments, essentially talking reform to death. Those who argue that we need more money in politics are using their control over the calendar to prevent a House bill--should one miraculously pass--from reaching the Senate before adjournment.

Despite these shenanigans, Mr. Chairman, we are not going to give up. The opponent of reform may succeed in pushing campaign finance reform into the 106th Congress, but reform is not going to die. The American people know the system is broken, and at the very least, we are going to give them a series of votes so after all the debate, after all the stalling tactics and parliamentary maneuvering, it will be perfectly clear who squandered this opportunity, and why.

Campaign Finance Reform

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