

Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly about the need to reform the system that finances our elections on political parties. Far too much of the time of this Chamber is devoted to fund-raising. We as Members know it, and so do our constituents. It is not surprising that the current system has led to a serious erosion of public confidence in the democratic process.

Also, we know that all too often the policy has been shaped by campaign contributions. One needs look no further than what we have seen with the tobacco industry over time. The most egregious example I have seen since I have been in Congress was the \$50 billion tax break for the cigarette manufacturers slipped into the 1997 tax reform legislation unannounced.

This campaign finance legislation, authored by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Shays) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Meehan), does not just improve our terribly flawed system. More important, it will break a logjam that has prevented reform.

It will show the American people we can deliver something that is good for the political process and good for America. It will help us clean up the political process and make other reforms easier and more likely. It will help us exercise the bipartisan collaborative reform tendencies that can have a huge impact on the people's business in this Congress and beyond.

I urge a rejection of the poison pill amendments, and to pass Shays-Meehan.