

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-1601

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER
202-224-5358

STATEMENT OF SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

MR. CHAIRMAN, FOR TWO YEARS, SENATE REPUBLICANS HAVE BEEN CRITICIZED FOR STONEWALLING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM. I APPRECIATE HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE TODAY TO TRY AND SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

DURING THE 100TH CONGRESS, SENATE REPUBLICANS HELD OUR GROUND, DESPITE THE PRESSURE OF A RECORD 8 CLOTURE VOTES ON THE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY'S CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM PROPOSAL, S. 2. WE STOOD FAST BECAUSE WE HAD A FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENT WITH THE TYPE OF REFORM OUTLINED IN S. 2. YOU MAY RECALL THAT WE OFFERED OUR OWN REFORM BILL IN 1987, BUT IT WAS NEVER GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE 101ST CONGRESS IS USING A DIFFERENT APPROACH, ONE THAT I HOPE WILL BE TRULY BI-PARTISAN AND NOT FORCE REPUBLICANS INTO ANOTHER TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT SITUATION. I WANT TO THANK THE CHAIRMAN AND THE RANKING MEMBER OF THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE FOR SCHEDULING THESE HEARINGS. WE NOW HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT OUR CASE -- OUR DEFINITION OF REFORM.

BEFORE WE GET INTO THE DEBATE, I ASK EACH MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE TO LOOK AT THE FACTS.

THE ELECTION RETURNS FOR 1988 INDICATE THAT INCUMBENTS HAVE MASTERED THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN SYSTEM, POSTING AN IMPRESSIVE 98.5% REELECTION RATE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDING A SOLID MAJORITY OF CONTESTED SENATE SEATS. EVEN THOUGH INCUMBENTS LIKE THAT TREND, I THINK THAT MOST OF US RECOGNIZE THAT THE SCALES HAVE BEEN TIPPED TOO FAR TO OUR OWN ADVANTAGE.

ONE DIFFICULTY FACING THOSE WHO ARE EAGER TO FORGE A CONSENSUS ON THIS ISSUE IS THAT EACH MEMBER OF THE SENATE BRINGS HIS OR HER OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO THE TABLE. WE COME FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, FROM STATES WITH DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND DIFFERENT POLITICS. EVEN THOSE SENATORS WHO COME FROM THE SAME STATE USUALLY RUN VERY DIFFERENT CAMPAIGNS. WITH ALL OF THESE COMPETING INTERESTS, DEVELOPING A CONSENSUS ON THIS ISSUE WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. BUT, THERE IS SOME COMMON GROUND. WE DO

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SHARE CERTAIN VALUES AND PRINCIPLES, AND I THINK THAT THE S. 2 DEBATE DURING THE 100TH CONGRESS, HELPED US STAKE OUT SOME OF THOSE AREAS.

EARLIER THIS WEEK ON THE SENATE FLOOR, THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER, SENATOR MITCHELL, IDENTIFIED THE REAL PROBLEM WITH THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN FINANCING SYSTEM. HE SAID -- AND I QUOTE, "THE OVERWHELMING SINGULAR FEATURE OF THE CURRENT [CAMPAIGN] SYSTEM IS THE ADVANTAGE IT GIVES TO INCUMBENTS" -- END QUOTE. I AGREE. AS INCUMBENTS, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THESE ADVANTAGES BEFORE MOVING AHEAD WITH CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM. OUR PROBLEM WILL BE CRAFTING A NON-PARTISAN REFORM PACKAGE THAT IS FAIR TO CHALLENGERS AND INCUMBENTS ALIKE.

LET'S FACE IT, EVERY MEMBER OF CONGRESS RECOGNIZES -- AND PROBABLY CAPITALIZES ON -- THE TREMENDOUS ADVANTAGES OF INCUMBENCY. EACH OF US GETS A PAID PROFESSIONAL STAFF, FREE ACCESS TO THE MEDIA, A FRANKING PRIVILEGE THAT GOT A HEALTHY BOOST LAST YEAR, AND A BIG FUNDRAISING ADVANTAGE FROM POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES. THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTED MONDAY THAT NEARLY \$7 OF EVERY \$10 GIVEN BY POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES IN 1988 WENT TO INCUMBENTS. COMMON CAUSE SUPPORTS THAT FINDING WITH A STUDY OF ITS OWN WHICH INDICATES THAT HOUSE INCUMBENTS ENJOYED A 7-TO-1 PAC FUNDING ADVANTAGE OVER CHALLENGERS LAST YEAR.

THESE STATISTICS SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE TO ANYONE SITTING ON THE COMMITTEE. BUT, THE NUMBERS ARE IMPORTANT. THEY ARE PART OF THE REASON WHY REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT CAMPAIGN SPENDING REFORM.

PACS HAVE EARNED A LOT OF BAD PUBLICITY LATELY. IRONICALLY, POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES WERE CREATED AS PART OF THE SWEEPING POST-WATERGATE REFORM MOVEMENT. AS I SAID ON THE SENATE FLOOR MONDAY, NOW THE "REFORM" NEEDS REFORMING.

AS THE COMMITTEE KNOWS, PACS WERE ORIGINALLY DESIGNED TO GIVE INDIVIDUALS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL. UNFORTUNATELY, MOST PACS HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE THE LION'S SHARE OF THEIR MONEY TO INCUMBENTS. ACCESS TO AN OFFICEHOLDER HAS BECOME MORE IMPORTANT THAN A MEMBER'S PARTY, IDEOLOGY OR EVEN VOTING RECORD ON THE ISSUES.

SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE. I DID NOT KNOW THAT YOU HAVE TO BUY ACCESS TO A MEMBER OF CONGRESS.

PAC DIRECTORS DEFEND THEIR INCUMBENCY PROTECTION PLAN AS A RESPONSE TO A LOPSIDED SYSTEM THAT OVERWHELMINGLY FAVORS INCUMBENTS. THEY POINT TO THE 98 PERCENT RE-ELECTION RATE POSTED BY HOUSE INCUMBENTS LAST YEAR TO SUPPORT THEIR CLAIM. BY GIVING TO INCUMBENTS, PAC DIRECTORS ARGUE THAT THEY ARE MAKING A BETTER "INVESTMENT".

WELL, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DON'T BUY THAT ARGUMENT.

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IF OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IS GOING TO WORK, CHALLENGERS MUST HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRULY COMPETE FOR ELECTED OFFICE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I SHARE YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THE DRAMATIC INCREASE IN CAMPAIGN SPENDING THAT WE HAVE WITNESSED OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS. ON MONDAY, YOU, SENATOR MITCHELL AND SENATOR BYRD EACH STATED THAT A CAP ON EXPENDITURES WAS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC RECIPE FOR REFORM.

I RESPECTFULLY DISAGREE. BY IMPOSING SPENDING LIMITS ON CANDIDATES, THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE MITCHELL-BOREN-BYRD BILL, S. 137, WOULD ADD ANOTHER BENEFIT TO THE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR INCUMBENCY PROTECTION PLAN THAT IS ALREADY IN PLACE.

PROFESSOR LARRY J. SABATO OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA HAS PUBLISHED A NUMBER OF STUDIES ON THE ISSUE OF CAMPAIGN SPENDING. HE HAS TESTIFIED ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM LEGISLATION ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS. IN HIS NEW BOOK, ENTITLED PAYING FOR ELECTIONS, SABATO STATES, "THE FREQUENT CALL FOR SPENDING CEILINGS IN CONGRESSIONAL RACES IS A BAD REFORM IDEA THAT SOUNDS GOOD. ...EXPENDITURE CEILINGS, IN MOST CIRCUMSTANCES, WILL FAVOR INCUMBENTS AND MAKE IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR CHALLENGERS TO DEFEAT ENTRENCHED LEGISLATORS."

THAT'S THE KEY -- IT "SOUNDS GOOD." THE WORD "REFORM" HAS A NICE RING TO IT, BUT YOU HAVE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO READ THE FINE PRINT TO DETERMINE WHAT KIND OF REFORM IT REALLY IS.

HERBERT ALEXANDER, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CITIZENS' RESEARCH FOUNDATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, IS ANOTHER EXPERT WHO HAS EXAMINED THIS ISSUE. HE OPPOSES SPENDING LIMITS, ARGUING THAT AGGREGATE SPENDING LIMITS WOULD BE "LIMITING TO THE CANDIDATE" BECAUSE MONEY THAT REMAINS OUTSIDE THE EXPENDITURE LIMITS -- "SOFT MONEY" EXPENDITURES AND PARALLEL CAMPAIGN EFFORTS -- WOULD INCREASE, AND THEY ARE, BY DEFINITION, BEYOND THE CANDIDATE'S CONTROL. AS FORMER CANDIDATES, I THINK EACH ONE OF US WANTS TO AVOID MAKING THAT KIND OF MISTAKE. EVERY CANDIDATE MUST BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER HIS OR HER OWN CAMPAIGN.

AMERICANS ARE CLEARLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE POLITICAL PROCESS. THEY HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR LACK OF INTEREST IN AN ALARMING NATIONWIDE DECLINE IN VOTER TURNOUT. PERHAPS IT'S THE RESULT OF A GROWING PERCEPTION THAT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE "BOUGHT AND PAID FOR" BY THE SPECIAL INTERESTS -- I CERTAINLY HOPE NOT.

MOST OF THE PROPOSALS I HAVE SEEN APPEAR TO SIDESTEP THE REAL ISSUE -- WHY DO MOST AMERICANS FEEL DISENFRANCHISED? THEY BELIEVE THAT THEY NO LONGER PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, THAT'S WHY.

OUR CONSTITUTION RESTS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF A REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT BASED ON FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. "OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE" -- THESE ARE NOT JUST WORDS. THIS IS

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A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF THE REPUBLICAN DEFINITION OF REFORM. I URGE MY COLLEAGUES ON THE RULES COMMITTEE TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER HOW COMPETING "REFORM" PROPOSALS COULD AFFECT THE AVERAGE AMERICAN'S ROLE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS BEFORE MAKING ANY FINAL DECISIONS.

I HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE REPUBLICAN TASK FORCE ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE BILL THAT DIRECTLY ADDRESSES THESE CONCERNS. TOGETHER, WE HAVE DEVELOPED A CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM PACKAGE THAT IS DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN CANDIDATES AND VOTERS. WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE MAIN STREET AMERICAN -- NOT THE CORPORATE EXECUTIVE, THE LABOR UNION BOSS, THE PAC DIRECTOR OR SOME MEDIA CONSULTANT -- WHO SHOULD ULTIMATELY HAVE THE INFLUENCE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

ON THE OPENING DAY OF THE 101ST CONGRESS, SENATOR MITCH McCONNELL OF KENTUCKY AND SENATOR TED STEVENS OF ALASKA JOINED ME IN INTRODUCING S. 7 -- THE CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT OF 1989, A BILL WHICH AT LAST COUNT HAD 15 REPUBLICAN COSPONSORS. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS LEGISLATION DESERVES SERIOUS CONSIDERATION, AND WE APPRECIATE HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE TO PRESENT OUR PROPOSALS.

THE DOLE-McCONNELL-STEVENS BILL TAKES ON THE SPECIAL INTERESTS BY SLASHING PAC CONTRIBUTIONS FROM \$5,000 PER CANDIDATE PER ELECTION TO \$1,000 PER ELECTION PER CANDIDATE; AND BY IMPOSING STRICT DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS ON "SOFT MONEY" CONTRIBUTIONS, THOSE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SCHEMES TRADITIONALLY USED BY BIG LABOR TO "GET-OUT-THE-VOTE" FOR ITS CANDIDATES.

OUR PLAN ENCOURAGES MORE GRASSROOTS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY BOOSTING INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM \$1,000 TO \$2,000 PER CANDIDATE PER ELECTION. WE ALSO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES BY RAISING THE CAP ON A PARTY'S CONTRIBUTION TO ITS OWN CANDIDATES. BY PROVIDING CHALLENGERS STRUGGLING TO BUILD A CREDIBLE CAMPAIGN WITH A NEST EGG -- FREE OF SPECIAL INTEREST OBLIGATIONS -- POLITICAL PARTIES CAN HELP CANDIDATES SPEND MORE TIME WITH VOTERS DISCUSSING THE ISSUES AND LESS TIME PLANNING FUNDRAISERS. WE GIVE INDIVIDUAL PAC CONTRIBUTORS MORE CONTROL OVER WHERE THEIR DOLLARS ARE GOING BY GIVING EVERY CONTRIBUTOR THE OPTION OF EARMARKING THEIR DONATIONS TO SPECIFIC CANDIDATES OR PARTIES.

ANYONE CONCERNED ABOUT CONTROLLING CAMPAIGN SPENDING HAS TO TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT WHERE CAMPAIGN DOLLARS ARE BEING SPENT. I CAN TELL YOU THAT WE HAVE. EVERY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT TELEVISION IS TO THE MODERN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. OVER THE PAST EIGHT YEARS, TV ADVERTISING COSTS HAVE MORE THAN TRIPLED. THE TV BUDGET NOW EATS UP MORE THAN HALF OF THE AVERAGE CAMPAIGN'S TOTAL RESOURCES.

WE HAVE INCLUDED A PROVISION THAT WOULD HELP CONTAIN COSTS BY GUARANTEEING THAT CANDIDATES HAVE ACCESS TO DISCOUNT TELEVISION

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TIME DURING THE LAST 45 DAYS PRECEDING A PRIMARY ELECTION AND FOR THE LAST 60 DAYS BEFORE A GENERAL ELECTION.

WE WOULD ALSO CLOSE THE SO-CALLED "MILLIONAIRE'S LOOPHOLE" BY REQUIRING THAT CANDIDATES PUBLICLY DISCLOSE THEIR INTENTION TO SPEND OR LOAN MORE THAN \$250,000 OF THEIR PERSONAL FUNDS IN THE RACE AT THE SAME TIME THAT THEY FILE FOR CANDIDACY. WE BELIEVE THAT PERSONAL WEALTH SHOULD NOT BE A PREREQUISITE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE. AS THE DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN STATED ON MONDAY, WE DO NOT WANT THE SENATE TO TURN INTO A "HOUSE OF LORDS."

IN ADDITION TO SHIFTING THE BALANCE AWAY FROM THE SPECIAL INTERESTS TOWARD THE AVERAGE AMERICAN, WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO INCREASE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF ALL RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES THAT AFFECT AN ELECTION. DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS AGREE THAT INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL CAMPAIGN-RELATED EXPENSES, WHETHER THEY ARE INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES, OR SO-CALLED "SOFT MONEY" CONTRIBUTIONS BY A CORPORATION, A PAC OR A LABOR UNION IS ESSENTIAL TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE SYSTEM.

MR. CHAIRMAN, YOU AND THE RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, SENATOR STEVENS, SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR SCHEDULING THESE HEARINGS ON A BIPARTISAN BASIS. AS A MEMBER OF THE RULES COMMITTEE, I APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS.

IN MY VIEW, THESE HEARINGS ARE THE STARTING POINT IN THE PROCESS. OUR PLAN IS NOT PERFECT, AND I DOUBT THAT WE AGREE ON EVERYTHING. BUT WE CAN AGREE THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE TO PROVE THAT THEY ARE SERIOUS ABOUT PRODUCING REAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM LEGISLATION THAT IS FAIR TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES, TO INCUMBENTS AND CHALLENGERS ALIKE.

I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN, THE RANKING MEMBER, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE.

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