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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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CHALLENGER SEED MONEY

DOLE AMENDMENT: HELPING CHALLENGERS KEY TO CAMPAIGN REFORM;
SEED MONEY TO IMPROVE COMPETITION AGAINST WELL-HEELED INCUMBENTS

WITH A RE-ELECTION RATE LAST NOVEMBER OF NEARLY 97%, IT'S FAIR TO SAY THAT CONGRESSIONAL INCUMBENTS ARE LIVING ON EASY STREET.

THAT'S WHY ANY CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROPOSAL BEARING THE NAME "REFORM" MUST GO THE EXTRA MILE TO HELP CHALLENGERS WHO RUN AGAINST INCUMBENTS.

INCUMBENTS ENJOY ALL KINDS OF ADVANTAGES -- THE FRANK, LARGE STAFFS, HIGH NAME RECOGNITION, EASY ACCESS TO THE MEDIA, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, A READY-MADE ABILITY TO TAP INTO THE SPECIAL-INTEREST MONEY THAT FUELS CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS.

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO SHARING THESE ADVANTAGES, CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGERS ARE MOST OFTEN LEFT OUT IN THE COLD, ALL BUT ELIMINATING COMPETITION IN POLITICS.

LET ME MAKE ONE THING CLEAR, THOUGH, MR. PRESIDENT: INCUMBENTS AREN'T TO BLAME FOR PLAYING BY THE RULES -- THE RULES ARE THE PROBLEM.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS TO CHANGE SOME OF THE RULES TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD, AND GIVE CHALLENGERS A FIGHTING CHANCE.

THIS AMENDMENT ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE RULES BY PROPOSING A "SEED MONEY" FUND FOR CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGERS.

SIMPLY PUT, THIS "SEED MONEY" FUND WOULD GIVE CHALLENGERS A MUCH-NEEDED "JUMP-START" IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THEIR CAMPAIGNS.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, MY AMENDMENT WOULD ALLOW THE POLITICAL PARTY COMMITTEES TO USE A SPECIAL COORDINATED EXPENDITURE FUND TO "MATCH" EARLY, IN-STATE CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED BY A CHALLENGER.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS MUST BE MADE PRIOR TO THE DATE OF THE PRIMARY ELECTION, AND THEY MUST BE MADE BY RESIDENTS OF THE STATE IN WHICH THE CHALLENGER IS RUNNING.

PARTY COMMITTEE MATCHING FUNDS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO A MAXIMUM OF \$150,000 FOR HOUSE CHALLENGERS AND \$250,000 FOR SENATE CHALLENGERS.

THE "SEED MONEY" IDEA IS THE BRAINCHILD OF NORM ORNSTEIN, A WELL-KNOWN CAMPAIGN FINANCE EXPERT AND A RESIDENT SCHOLAR AT THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE.

IN MY VIEW, IT'S AN IDEA THAT THE SENATE OUGHT TO ENDORSE, PARTICULARLY IF WE'RE SERIOUS ABOUT IMPROVING COMPETITION AND ASSISTING CASH-STRAPPED CHALLENGERS.

NOW, I KNOW THAT MY COLLEAGUES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE WILL SAY THAT THIS AMENDMENT WILL HELP THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

WELL, THEY'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.

BUT, THIS AMENDMENT WILL HELP THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY TOO.

THIS AMENDMENT DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS.

IT'S PRO-PARTY. PRO-COMPETITION. PRO-REPUBLICAN, AND PRO-DEMOCRAT.

REPUBLICANS HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT THE BEST WAY TO GET MORE RESOURCES TO CASH-POOR CHALLENGERS IS TO INCREASE THE LIMITS ON WHAT THE TWO PARTIES CAN GIVE TO THEIR CANDIDATES.

IN FACT, THIS APPROACH WAS ENDORSED BY THE BIPARTISAN PANEL OF CAMPAIGN EXPERTS APPOINTED LAST FEBRUARY BY THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER AND MYSELF.

AS THE BIPARTISAN PANEL POINTED OUT LAST YEAR, THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE ONE PRIMARY FOCUS -- ELECTING THEIR OWN CANDIDATES AND DEFEATING THE CANDIDATES OF THE OTHER PARTY.

(MORE)

SO, IF WE REALLY WANT TO IMPROVE COMPETITION IN POLITICS, THEN WE OUGHT TO BE STRENGTHENING -- NOT WEAKENING -- THE ONE INSTITUTION IN AMERICA THAT HAS A VESTED INTEREST IN REMOVING INCUMBENTS -- THE POLITICAL PARTIES, DEMOCRAT AND REPUBLICAN.

MY AMENDMENT HELPS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IMPORTANT GOAL.

AND I URGE MY COLLEAGUES TO SUPPORT IT WHEN IT COMES TIME TO VOTE LATER THIS AFTERNOON.

WE HAVE DEBATED CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM LEGISLATION FOR 7 DAYS NOW.

IT'S BEEN A GOOD DEBATE, A SPIRITED DEBATE AT TIMES, AND IT HAS CERTAINLY TAKEN A LOT OF THE SENATE'S TIME.

BUT WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, WHEN ALL THE SPEECHES HAVE BEEN MADE, THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT PRESIDENT BUSH WILL NOT -- AND SHOULD NOT -- SIGN THIS LEGISLATION INTO LAW.

DEMOCRATS MAY CLING TO TAXPAYER FINANCING OF CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS AS THE CENTERPIECE OF THEIR "REFORM" PACKAGE.

BUT REPUBLICANS OPPOSE -- AND WILL CONTINUE TO OPPOSE -- BROADCAST VOUCHERS, DISCOUNTED MAIL RATES, TREASURY OUTLAYS TO COMBAT INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES -- ALL OF WHICH AMOUNTS TO NOTHING MORE THAN A WELFARE PROGRAM FOR POLITICIANS.

DEMOCRATS MAY CLAIM THAT REFORM IS MEANINGLESS WITHOUT SPENDING LIMITS.

BUT THE SPENDING LIMITS IN S. 3 ARE MEANINGFUL ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY HURT CHALLENGERS, HELP INCUMBENTS, AND REDUCE -- NOT IMPROVE -- COMPETITION IN POLITICS.

AS I SAID YESTERDAY, OUR NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR BIPARTISANSHIP WILL BE THE HOUSE-SENATE CONFERENCE -- IF THE HOUSE EVER PASSES A CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM BILL AND IF IT DOES SO ON A TIMELY BASIS.

WHEN WE REACH THIS FORK IN THE ROAD, MY DEMOCRATIC COLLEAGUES WILL HAVE A SIMPLE CHOICE: THEY CAN SCUTTLE CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM FOR YET ANOTHER YEAR BY DEMANDING THAT THE TAXPAYERS OF THIS COUNTRY SUBSIDIZE POLITICIANS.

OR THEY CAN WORK WITH HOUSE AND SENATE REPUBLICANS TO CRAFT A REFORM BILL ACCEPTABLE TO THE PRESIDENT AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

I WANT REFORM.

THAT'S WHY I INTRODUCED TWO REFORM BILLS IN JANUARY.

AND THAT'S WHY I HAVE WORKED WITH THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER IN AN EFFORT TO SEEK SOME BIPARTISAN SOLUTIONS.

THE SIMPLE TRUTH IS THAT THERE ARE MANY AREAS ON WHICH THE TWO PARTIES CAN AGREE -- PAC REFORM, BROADCASTING, BUNDLING, INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES, REFORM OF FEC PROCEDURE -- THESE ARE JUST SEVERAL EXAMPLES.

I HAVE EVEN PROPOSED SOMETHING-CALLED "FLEXIBLE FUNDRAISING TARGETS," WHICH ARE A VARIATION OF THE DEMOCRAT'S SPENDING-LIMITS CONCEPT.

BUT, REPUBLICANS ARE WALKING IN LOCK-STEP WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WHEN WE SAY "NO" TO PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICIANS, AND "NO" TO THE TYPE OF SPENDING LIMITS THAT HARM COMPETITION, NOT IMPROVE IT.

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