blocked the appointment of conferees. Since 1987, Democrats have been in the forefront of moving campaign finance reform. Here we are again today. We have toiled at bringing campaign finance reform to American politics for nearly a decade. We will not rest until we get it.

The Democrat bill which I offer contains real reform that will make real changes to the electoral process in this country. My will seeks to reduce the power of money in elections and return that power to the people. Too much money too often decides who gets to Congress and who does not. Congress should be more reflective of the American population. Right now Congress is full of, and I must admit, white males like me. But my bill levels the playing field so that we will see more minorities, more women, more moderate income persons serving in the United States Congress, those who can run for office and be competitive.

If we do not stop the money chase, if we do not stop wealthy people from buying office, this Congress will be one big elitist white boys club. If we do not impose some limits, as my bill does, if we do not enhance disclosure requirements, as my bill does, if we do not level the playing field, as my bill does, the American people will continue to complain about the influence of money in elections, about not being able to trace where the money comes from, about Congress not doing what it is supposed to to clean up the system.

We have a chance this week on Thursday to clean up the system. I urge Members to take a look at my bill, take a look, and I speak to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, take a look at H.R. 3505 and join me in voting for something that is really positive. Join me in showing the American people that like the gift ban, like lobbying reform, like the compliance act, this Congress can do what is right and enact serious reform to bring order out of chaos.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

KIRBY PUCKETT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, shock waves reverberated through the sports world on Friday. Kirby Puckett told us what we did not want to hear, that this was the last day that he would wear Twins uniform No. 34.

Baseball is a game for optimists. ''We will get them tomorrow'' and ''wait until next year'' are examples created by baseball fans. We all wanted to believe that the doctors would perform magic and that Kirby would once again be patrolling the outfield and bedeviling American League pitchers. It was not to be.

If baseball is a game for optimists, Kirby Puckett was its best salesman. Maybe it was all that energy and enthusiasm trapped inside that teddy bear body that allowed him to defy the laws of gravity, the laws of physics. With leaps that would make Michael Jordan proud, Kirby robbed countless hitters of home runs.

In a sports world dominated today by megabuck contracts and even bigger egos, he was a throwback to an earlier day, to earlier day heroes. He did not believe in trash talk. He let his play speak for itself, and speak it did.

His record of excellence shouts at you. In his roughly 12 years in the major leagues, he appeared in 12 All Star games. He won six Golden Gloves. He hit 207 home runs, had a lifetime batting average of .318, and he has two World Series rings to show for it.

Not bad for a kid who almost spent his life at the Ford assembly plant on Terrance Avenue. He got laid off and returned to baseball, and we all are richer for it.

Kirby was the youngest of nine children, raised by two loving parents in the projects of Chicago's south side. We are all proud of Kirby but no one should be prouder than his mother. To paraphrase one fan, Kirby Puckett is a wonderful human being who just happened to be one of the greatest ball players of all time.

Every day he demonstrated one of the most important eternal truths, that the key to happiness is to be thankful. And so, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Twins fans in the upper Midwest and sports fans all over the world, permit me to send this personal message: Thank you, thank you, Kirby Puckett. Good luck and may God bless you.

THE KELLWOOD CO. OF WEST VIRGINIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I first tonight want to commend the Kellwood plant in Spencer, WV. As garment manufacturers across the Nation are working to improve working conditions, I have today sent a letter to the Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich, praising the Kellwood Co. of Spencer as an innovative firm which is a step ahead in the push to eliminate abuse of labor laws.

Kellwood, which is the largest private label clothing supplier in the United States, employs 500 people at a major manufacturing and distribution facility in West Virginia. This facility has long been a stabilizing force in the community and is a respected and revered employer. In the summer of 1995, Kellwood began implementing a program requiring its contractors to submit to independent audits and, if needed, follow-up remediation efforts. The company is now in the process of completing audits of its contractors nationwide to make sure they are following the rules.

I believe these voluntary efforts by Kellwood track perfectly with the Labor Department's no-sweat initiative and they are successful in correcting the contractor problems that exist in the industry.

The U.S. Department of Labor no-sweat campaign is an effort to crack down on sweatshops and clothing contractors violating the Fair Labor Standards Act by using child labor that forces workers to put in excessive hours without adequate pay or operating unsafe shops.

The Kellwood Co. has become a corporate leader in eliminating these abuses. It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Labor Department will recognize the leadership role that Kellwood has taken in regard to contractor compliance, particulary as Kellwood is one of a number of companies taking part in the upcoming Fashion Industry Forum at Marymount University where various parts of the apparel industry will meet to try to continue taking on the problem of sweatshops. Kellwood is to be commended.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. WISE. I had wanted to talk about reform because this is reform week here. This is when the Republican leadership is to bring to the floor its campaign finance reform bill. The problem is, this is not campaign reform, it is campaign retreat. What this does is it does not get cash out of politics. It results in cashing in.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that this bill that will be brought to the floor, only this week a distinguished West Virginian, Rebecca Cain, the leader, president of the National League of Women Voters, criticized this bill as not being true reform.

I think it is important to point out that most Americans, most West Virginians when they talk to me, think the problem is money needs to be taken out of politics, not put into it.

Let us look at what this bill, if it passes, would do. It would permit the maximum amount that individuals can give to a candidate to go from $1,000 to $2,500 per election. That does not sound like reform to me. It would permit the cumulative amount that individuals can give to candidates and to political action committees to go from $25,000 to $72,500 per year. Does not sound like reform to me.

It would also permit the maximum amount that individuals can give to any one political party, committee, to go from $20,000 to $58,000 per year. Incidentally, that is on top of the $72,500 that is already permitted.

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Now, this is a proposal I really find fascinating. In fact, under this proposal

a wealthy individual would now be able to give over $300,000 in hard-money contributions to affect Federal elections in their State, another $2.8 million in hard money to other State political action committees, for a total of $3.1 million in a single year. Now, that is real encouraging grassroots participation. That is up, incidentally, $3.1 million. Under the present law it is $25,000. We get much more reform like this, there is no need to have any law at all.

And, incidentally, the bill still would permit unlimited amounts of soft money, which is probably the greatest abuse of all.

Whom is this bill directed to, Mr. Speaker? Only 1 percent of Americans gave campaign contributions of $200 or more during the past election, and it is indisputable that raising these individual limits can only increase the influence of the wealthy. I thought the purpose was to get grassroots participation to encourage people to participate into elections, to get more volunteers. You pass something like this, and all you do is send a message we are only interested in a rich person's club, we are only interested in how much influence money can buy.

We want real campaign reform, and that can be done on a bipartisan basis. But this is not campaign reform, it is campaign retreat, Mr. Speaker, and this is a hypocrisy to bring this out or it is ludicrous to bring this out on the floor and call it campaign reform.

This bill should be limiting costs, not increasing them. It should be encouraging small donors, not discouraging them. It should be limiting outside expenditures by outside groups. It just does nothing to curb that. It does nothing to restrict independent expenditures in a campaign, or not accountable, and it does nothing to make incumbents any more easily challenged. In fact, this is an incumbent protection bill because 9 times out of 10 that incumbent can go get that big contribution much more easily than a challenger.

Not campaign reform, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LONGLEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

SOCIAL SECURITY PREDICAMENT: FEWER WORKERS, MORE RETIREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about one of the better kept secrets in Washington, and that is the fact that the Social Security trust fund has no money in it. There is a lot of current retirees that would like to expect that the promises on Social Security are going to stay there for the rest of their life. There is a lot of individuals that are going to be retiring in the next several years, and certainly young workers today that hope that there is some way that Social Security that they are now paying for will have something to offer them when they retire.

The predicament is that Social Security is going broke. The recent Social Security Administration estimate that they are going to be out of money earlier than they expected should be a red flag, should alert, Mr. Speaker, not only the Members of this body, but certainly the American people that we need to deal with Social Security. No longer can we put our heads in the sand and pretend that this very serious problem does not exist.

I introduced a bill last week, H.R. 3758, that deals with the problem of Social Security solvency. This bill is the only bill that has been introduced in the House that has been scored by the Social Security Administration, and it has been scored in a way that Social Security will continue to exist at least for the next 75 years, and the way it is written, Mr. Speaker, Social Security will continue to survive.

Now let me first say what the predicament is that is causing the problem in Social Security. In the early 1940's there were 42 people working and paying for the retirement benefits of every one Social Security retiree. In 1950 there were 17 people working and paying in their Social Security tax to support each one retiree. today Mr. Speaker, here is the problem: There is only three people working, supporting, paying in for each retiree, and when the baby-boomers retire, there is only going to be two working people in this country supporting that retiree.

You know what we have done? With the fewer number of workers for the larger number of retirees, we have continued to increase their taxes. Since 1970 we have increased taxes on those workers 34 times. So we continue to increase the tax on a fewer and fewer number of those working, and in terms of the demographic problems, we have an aging population. When we started Social Security, the average age of mortality, the average life expectancy, was 63 years old. Today it is 72 for a man and 76 for women. If you are lucky enough to reach age 65, you can expect to live until you are 84.

So we have an aging population on the one hand, fewer people working, and, you know, there is no trust fund, there is no reserve, it is a pay-as-you-go program where the workers today pay their money in and immediately when the Social Security Administration gets that money, they pay it out to existing retirees. If there is anything left, the Federal Government grabs the rest of that money for general fund spending.

Some people would like to believe that, look, as long as government has got those IOU's in the trust fund that somehow government can come up with the money to pay that trust fund back. I do not know how they are going to do that. How would they do that? They do it either by increasing taxes on those working to increase the burden on those individuals, and, Mr. Speaker, do you know, do the American people realize, that 70 percent of the American people today pay more in the FICA tax than they do in the income tax?

And so I say tax increases are out, so I have gradually increased the retirement age 2 years beyond the existing 67, gradually decreased the benefits for those higher income people, and what it has done is increase the solvency of Social Security to the extent that we allow those surpluses to be invested by each individual worker. So that individual worker now can take some of that FICA tax, they can take that dollar; it is going to be their own dollars, it is not going to be somebody else's dollars, and they can say, look, I am investing this in my fund, in my passbook savings account so I am assured of that money. And when you consider the fact that Treasury has had a real return of 2.3 percent on every dollar that the Treasury has taken from Social Security, and when you consider that the average equity investment is 9 percent, we end up with a bill that is going to give today's workers even greater benefits in their retirement than they would have under the existing system, plus it keeps it solvent.

Let us take our head out of the sands. Let us start dealing with the problem of Social Security.

H.R. 3760 ENCOURAGES CAMPAIGNS TO BE FINANCED BY THE WEALTHY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take my 5 minutes to talk about this Republican so-called Campaign Finance Reform Act proposal. When I looked at it today and looked at some of the details, I have to say that I was actually shocked that in the context of a so-called reform week, which I guess now on the part of the Republican leadership is limited to this so-called Campaign Finance Reform Act, that they have proposed that the Republican leadership has come up with a bill that, in my opinion, is nothing short of obscene in terms of what it would do to the political system.

My constituents, I have to be honest, do not complain a great deal to me about campaigns and financing campaigns, but those that do write to me, those that do talk to me about the issue, the number 1 concern on their mind is the obscene amount of money that is spent on congressional races, on