CONCERN REGARDING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I do not usually address the House on 5 minutes before the session, but I am not sure how much time will be given to debate campaign finance reform when these bills are brought before us under suspension. I just want to make a number of points for the RECORD for that debate.

First, I want to express my concern that on a Friday afternoon, after Members were proceeding to leave, the House was told for the first time that we would have debate on four campaign finance bills, debate that likely will begin before many Members get back to Washington.

I would also like to express concern as to how we will be debating these bills. We will have four campaign bills debated under suspension of the calendar, which has three major flaws:

We cannot amend a bill under suspension.

The debate is limited to each side having 20 minutes, so a total of 40 minutes for the major issue of campaign finance reform. Admittedly, there will be four 40-minute debates, because there are four bills.

And it takes, as has been pointed out by my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), a two-thirds vote to pass legislation. In the Senate, they need 60 votes to invoke cloture and actually end debate and have a vote on a bill, 60 votes out of 100, or 60 percent. Here we need, in the House, under suspension, 66 and two-thirds percent of the membership's vote. Mr. Speaker, this is not the Senate, thank goodness, and it should not take a supermajority to pass meaningful campaign finance reform.

I would like to now address the issue of what bills are coming forward. They are all bills that have been promoted by Republicans, not Democrats, so the Democrat party and leadership was not consulted in what bills would come up. It strikes me that, at the very least, they should have been. Had I been in the minority, I would be outraged to see Democrats do the same thing to a Republican minority.

Second, not only were Democrats not consulted, Democrat proposals are not being allowed to be debated. I am wondering why we would not allow such a debate, given the rule says we need two-thirds to pass.

Third, I would like to express the concern that a bipartisan group of Members who have been working in good faith have not been consulted and that some of the bills are bipartisan. So there are many reasons to express concern about the process, which, is deplorable.

Having said that, I want to acknowledge that three of these bills, in my judgment, merit support. I do not intend to vote against a good bill just because I do not like the process. I vote against a rule because I do not like the process. I have been in public life 24 years in the State House and in Congress, and I learned a long time ago you do not vote against a good bill simply because you do not like the process.

The Thomas bill is a comprehensive bill worked on just by Republicans. It is a good-faith attempt to get a bill the Republican party likes. To me, it is not a bill that merits support in its present condition. It has flaws to it that I hope are pointed out during the debate, but it was a comprehensive effort to deal with Republican concerns.

The FEC bill, providing disclosure when you raise and spend money, is a no-brainer for me. That should get our support.

A ban on foreign contributions, how could we vote against a bill that bans foreign contributions? It gets my support, if that is, in fact, the bill that comes forward.

Paycheck protection is a little more controversial. I understand why some might not vote for it. It basically says if you are a member of a union, the union has to get your permission before it supports particular candidates or political causes. I think they should get permission of a member beforehand.

My wife had to get out of the union because her money was being given to candidates she did not support. The only way she could prevent this was to invoke the Beck rule and say her money could not be used. Under the Beck rule she is forced out of the union, and pays an agency fee.

Mr. Speaker, 84 percent of my constituents said they believe, and I quote, ''Our democracy is threatened by the influence of unlimited campaign contributions by individuals, corporations, labor unions, and other interest groups.'' A biased statement?

I asked what my constituents felt in a questionnaire I sent to them. Fifty-one percent strongly agreed, 33 percent agreed. Eighty-four percent of my constituents believe our democracy is threatened by the influence of unlimited campaign contributions by individuals, corporations, labor unions, and other interest groups. Regrettably, their Representative will not be able to vote for the McCain-Feingold bill, which prevents soft money, those unlimited contributions my constituents abhor.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM PROCESS HAS BEEN RIGGED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minute.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, let the record show that we have three former Peace Corps volunteers on the floor today, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), I appreciate his remarks, the Speaker pro tempore, and myself.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss probably the issue of today, which is campaign finance reform. What is happening today is that the process has been rigged. We have a suspension of democracy, not a suspension of consent items before the House.

We are scheduled to vote this evening on campaign finance reform, on four bills, as the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) pointed out, all Republican bills without any Democrat input, although the Democrat bill that I authored has 106 cosponsors, the most that any campaign finance reform bill has ever had in the history of this House.

I would like to speak a little bit about that history, because we have, in the past, passed campaign finance reform. In fact, if Members will go back to probably times when some of the Members here were serving, the 100th Congress, in 1987 and 1988, the House bill was introduced by a House Member from California, Mr. Coelho. It had 96 cosponsors in all.

Then the Senate bill, which was S. 2, was introduced by a Democrat from Oklahoma, Senator Boren. That bill was filibustered by the Republicans for a record of seven cloture votes, and it was defeated by the Republican filibuster.

In the 101st Congress, 1991 to 1992, again Mr. Swift, a Democrat from Washington, introduced the House bill here, which had several cosponsors, and it passed the House. It passed on a bipartisan vote, 255 to 155, including 15 Republicans that voted for the bill.

Then what happened is that the conferees, because the Senate blocked the conferees, were never appointed. So, again, the second time that a bill had gotten blocked by Republican efforts.

In the 102nd Congress, which is 1991 to 1992, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) sponsored the bill. It had 82 cosponsors in all. It passed the House on November 25, 1991, by a vote of 273 to 156. The Senate had a similar measure.

The House agreed to the Senate measure and it passed the Senate, it was again by Senator Boren, by a vote of 56 to 42. It went to conference. The conference report was voted on by this House 259 to 165 on April 9, 1992. Guess what happened in 1992? On May 5, President Bush vetoed the bill.

That is similar to the bill that I have up today, H.R. 600. There is not much difference. It became, I think, the bill, most of which is in the Shays-Meehan bill. Again, an effort by the Republicans to block campaign finance reform.

Then in the 103rd Congress, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) again introduced this bill, H.R. 3. It passed the House on November 22, 1993, by a vote of 255 to 175. The Senate

bill passed again, introduced by Senator Boren, a Democrat from Oklahoma, passed the Senate on June 7, 1993, by a vote of 60 to 38. The cloture failed on the motion to go to conference on September 23; and due to a filibuster by Senator GRAMM, a Republican from Texas, the cloture failed on September 27.

Again, in the 104th Congress I took over the work of the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), I guess because both of us are SAMs, and I guess the Sam Caucus sticks together. I introduced the H.R. 3505. It had numerous cosponsors. It was a substitute to the Republican campaign finance reform bill, and it failed on this floor by 177 to 243. It received bipartisan support. And the act goes on.

Now we are in the 105th Congress. I have introduced H.R. 600. It had a 106 cosponsors. It cannot get out of committee. It cannot even be offered as a substitute. So history has shown that when the Democrats were in power, we were able to get bills off this floor. We were able to get more substantive bills than are being addressed today.

I think what is happening today a real sham. It is a sham on democracy. It is shameful what we are doing.

There is a funeral going on right now in New Mexico. Most of our Members are there. They cannot even participate in this discussion.

The vote is on the suspense calendar, which requires a two-thirds vote, an extraordinary vote. The suspense calendar is for things that are automatic, that people have no debate on. They are not controversial issues. Yet, this day was the day chosen to hear this.

Let me tell the Members what has been going on in this House. We ought to all be outraged because, since the beginning of this year, this session, the oversight committee chaired by our colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), and by Senator FRED THOMPSON have subpoenaed in the House 587 people, put 114 depositions, had 13 days of public hearings, had 33 witnesses and spent $6.8 million, and nothing coming out for campaign finance reform. This is outrageous.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). Members are reminded not to make reference to individual Members of the other body when they speak.

THE SPEAKER PROMISED DEBATE AND A VOTE ON REAL, BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, a promise is a promise. Back in November, the Speaker promised us a bipartisan campaign finance bill, a vote here on this floor. This is not a bipartisan campaign finance bill. It is a partisan campaign finance reform bill. This plan to put campaign finance bills up for suspension votes is like a magic trick: Now you see them, now you do not. The House leadership is using the process to ensure that these reform bills disappear into their magic black hats.

The American people must know that their own democratic process is being used against them. There are enough Members of this House willing to vote for reform, and the House leadership simply will not put the bill out on the floor for a vote. They are manipulating the system. We need pressure; and we will keep pressure on until we bring a real bill, like Shays-Meehan, up for a real vote on this House floor.

If the House leadership spent as much time fixing the Nation's problems as it spends figuring out how to avoid having a vote on this Shays-Meehan bill on the floor, our work here in Washington would have been completed. If the House leadership appropriated as much money trying to fix the Nation's problems as it spends figuring out how to shoot down the opposition, our work here in Washington would be finished.

Millions have been spent so far on clearly partisan investigations into the 1996 elections, but there has been no serious attempt to reform the system. We have had many, many hearings in the Burton committee on alleged campaign finance abuses; and absolutely every single one of the abuses involved the use of soft money. Instead of continuing to look at problems, we should be spending time on how to fix the problems.

Even if we just had a vote on one segment out of Shays-Meehan, which is banning soft money, we would have removed the ability for campaign finance abuse, which is being alleged in the many hearings before the Burton committee.

□ 1300

Another point that is particularly troubling is the funding for the Federal Elections Commission. This is the only body that is empowered, and it is a bipartisan body, it is the only body that is empowered to look at campaign finance abuses and to try to correct the system, and to find those that abuse it. Yet the Federal Elections Commission has not been appropriated the money that they requested just to investigate the abuses that are before them. Yet there have been multimillions appropriated, $40 million appropriated to look into investigations before the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight on alleged abuses. Yet the Federal Elections Commission, the one bipartisan body that is empowered to actually do something about it, has not received the funding that they requested to get the job done.

The money keeps pouring in. The FEC recently released a report showing that congressional candidates are setting new fund-raising records. In 1997 candidates for House and Senate seats raised $232.1 million. That is a $48 million increase from the same period in the cycle before.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is getting worse on both sides of the aisle and Members from both sides of the aisle are asking for reform. More than 300 Members of this body have signed on to one form or another of reform campaign finance legislation before this body. Mr. Speaker, let us bring it to the floor for a vote. We certainly need to vote for campaign finance reform before we go back to our constituents and ask them to vote for us in our own reelection bids.

Mr. Speaker, a promise is a promise, and it is time to turn the promise of the Speaker's handshake with President Clinton and others confirming support for campaign finance, it is time to turn the promise of that handshake into the reality of a law. At the very least, we should bring Shays-Meehan to the floor for a vote.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We recognize, O God, how we long for unity in our communities and we pray for a harmony that brings people together in a spirit of cooperation and teamwork. Yet, we know, too, that there can be enmity and animosity which does no one any good and which weakens us as a Nation.

So we pray, gracious God, that we will be instruments of Your peace, and messengers of Your reconciliation so that our faith will be active in love, and our citizenship will be seen in our deeds. Help us to translate our words of prayer this day into respect for others and a reverence for all Your people. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.