

The American people, who sent us here in the first place, know this and, I believe, support our efforts on our children's behalf.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FAIR
ELECTIONS ACT

HON. RICK WHITE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 14, 1995

Mr. WHITE. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the Fair Elections Act.

This bill creates a nonpartisan commission which will have 90 days to recommend reforms to the laws that govern congressional elections. The commission's recommendations will be unamendable and placed on a legislative fast track. The time has come for Congress to take itself out of the debate and turn the decisions over to an independent group devoid of politics.

Our current Federal election laws are flawed and have been since they were enacted following Watergate. Several aspects of that initial campaign finance reform effort were found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. However, Congress never substantively revisited the pieces that were left standing. Therefore, the current election laws consist of an incomplete and complex web of regulations—a web which has not worked and is in need of a complete overhaul.

An overhaul is necessary because the current election laws have produced a system that is biased toward incumbent Members of Congress and where special interest financing has a disproportionate influence over the process. These items must be corrected but it must be done in a responsible manner that restores trust and confidence in Congress and those who serve here. We must not, in our haste for reform, further muddle the process by adding regulations which only perpetuate the advantage of incumbency.

Therefore, as we move forward with campaign finance reform, it is important that Congress engage in a substantive debate and approach the process with three objectives firmly in mind: First, we must encourage fair and open elections that provide voters with meaningful information about candidates and issues. Second, we must eliminate the disproportionate influence of special interest financing of congressional elections. And third, we must work to create a system where incumbent Members of Congress do not possess an inherent advantage over challengers.

It is my belief that the Fair Elections Act will result in real campaign finance reform that accomplishes those objectives.

For too long, Congress has allowed partisan politics to influence campaign finance reform efforts. Any campaign finance proposal that has seen the light of day in recent years has essentially been an incumbent protection plan, the bills receiving attention this year not excluded. Congress has not been willing to level the proverbial playing field where incumbent Members of Congress and challengers compete. Nor has Congress been able to move the campaign finance debate above partisan rhetoric and inject legitimate academic discourse and empirical findings into campaign finance reform proposals.

The Fair Elections Act will finally allow Congress to correct the deficiencies of previous

reform efforts. By establishing a 12 member commission in which no more than 4 members may be of the same political party, we will create an environment which is nonpartisan. That is, we will establish an arena where the partisan gloves that have doomed past reform efforts are removed and legislation is produced which incorporates new ideas and solutions rather than recycling the stale rhetoric of recent years.

Real reform is about making sure our Federal campaign finance laws do not protect the incumbent. As a freshman, one of the lessons that I've learned is that Congress is the last body we should count on to do a fair, and quick, job of reforming our campaign finance laws. It has become clear to me that, unless Congress is forced to take an up or down vote on this issue, we are never going to get politics out of the process. No reform passed in this Congress will take effect until the 1998 election cycle. Therefore, rather than simply tinker around the edges, significant reform will only take place by forming a commission to revamp the entire system.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 14, 1995

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House of Representatives considered a number of bills under suspension of the rules, and I missed two recorded votes.

During the consideration of legislation in the House, I was in California to attend the formal introduction of the International Institute for Surface Transportation Studies, an initiative that was created by Congress as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Infrastructure Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-240).

Had I had been present, I would have voted "nay" on the Archer motion to postpone the vote to override the President's veto on the debt limit legislation, rollcall vote No. 788, and I would have voted "aye" on H.R. 657, legislation to extend the Federal Power Act deadline for construction of three hydroelectric projects in Arkansas, rollcall vote No. 789.

A SPECIAL SALUTE TO FATHER
AUSTIN COOPER: MARKING 25
YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. LOUIS STOKES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 14, 1995

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Congress, I take pride in acknowledging individuals from my congressional district who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the community. Today, I rise to salute an individual who has dedicated his life to serving others. For the past 25 years, Father Austin R. Cooper, Sr., has served as rector at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Cleveland, OH. Earlier this month, starting on November 5, 1995, St. Andrew's began a special month-long celebration to mark his tenure as a leader of this historic church. I take special pride in saluting Father Cooper on this important mile-

stone. I want to share with my colleagues some information regarding this gifted individual and his service of ministry.

Father Cooper is the son of the late Benjamin and Louise Cooper, who came to the United States from the West Indies. As a young man, Father Cooper graduated from St. Augustine's College where he received a degree in sociology. He received a master of divinity degree from the Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL. On May 13, 1961, Father Cooper celebrated his ordination as a priest. During his ministry, this gifted leader has served in churches located in Florida, New York, and Texas.

Father Cooper was chosen as rector at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on September 15, 1970. For 25 years, he has been a strong leader of that congregation and a guiding force in the Cleveland community. The church has been a beacon of light, providing programs and services to assist families, the elderly, and youth throughout the community. In addition, under Father Cooper's leadership, St. Andrew's Church was not only able to burn its mortgage 9 years ahead of schedule, but the St. Andrew's Church Foundation which was established in 1983 with \$35,000, now boasts assets in excess of one quarter million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, the awards and honors bestowed upon Father Cooper over the years represent the highest tribute to an individual who has dedicated his life to serving others. Father Cooper is the past recipient of the Distinguished Serve Award and the Black Church Religious Award from the Cleveland Branch of the NAACP. He was also recognized by the executive council of the Episcopal Church for his leadership in the struggle for civil rights.

Father Cooper's name is included in published editions of "Notable Americans" and "Who's Who Among Black Americans." He is the cofounder, first secretary, and past president of the Union of Black Episcopalians. Father Cooper is also the former president of the Cleveland Branch of the NAACP. Other memberships include Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Prince Hall Masons.

Mr. Speaker, Father Austin Cooper is a leader of both national and international prominence. He has visited the White House to participate in briefings and advise leaders on the issues confronting the Nation. In addition, Father Cooper has led delegations to international conferences in East Africa, the West Indies, and other points around the globe.

Throughout his service in the ministry, Father Austin Cooper has benefited from the support of a caring and understanding family. His devotion to his lovely wife of 30 years, Patricia, is unsurpassed. The Coopers are the proud parents of three children: Austin Rellins II, Angela Patricia, and Kimberly Louise. They are also the proud grandparents of Ashley Arianne.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, I have been the beneficiary of the friendship and counsel of Father Cooper. He is a gifted man of God and a devoted leader. On the occasion of his 25th anniversary in service to St. Andrew's, I take special pride in saluting Father Cooper. I ask that my colleagues join me in wishing him Godspeed as he continues on this important mission of service.