these 608 citizens, each of whose cases has been individually documented, each of whose situations has been chronicled, so that this is factual information. In fact, some of these people have been sighted within the territorial limits of Iraq. Yet the international Red Cross has not been able to bring these individuals back to their homeland.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous and this is wrong. This institution needs to go on record on a regular basis, letting Saddam and the Iraqi Government know that we are watching and that we are asking the question why these people are not being allowed to be reunited with their loved ones. The war is over. The conflict has ended. Saddam, in fact, accepted the terms of U.N. resolution 686 and 687, and yet here we are in 1997 in March and we still do not have these people returned to their homeland.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that if Saddam Hussein ever expects to have the world community give him the kind of respect and perhaps the cooperation that he has said that he would like to have, and in fact that he says he deserves, he should start by coming to the public, to the world public at large, and explaining why these people are being held; and, in fact, he should take the effort to return these people back to their homeland.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, the documentation for these individuals is, in fact, very substantive. The National Committee of Missing and POW Affairs has reported the number to be 608. This committee knows the exact numbers because they have a separate file and a separate computer database established for each of these POWs.

What we are saying, Mr. Speaker, I know what my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from California, DANA ROHRABACHER, who wanted to be here with me this evening. He would say, if he were here, that we want the Iraqi Government to allow these people to go back to their homelands and that we want to have a full accounting for these individuals, and that we expect the United Nations and the world community at large to assist us in making sure that we do not, in fact, allow these people to be kept under the illegal control of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Government.

There have been concerted efforts through an allied coalition, but these efforts have largely been unsuccessful. We are saying it is about time now that these other nations respectfully demand that which we are demanding, and that is a full accounting and return of these hostages.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my good friend and colleague, Mr. ROHRABACHER, for such time as he may want to use.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I join with the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] and my colleagues tonight in calling on Saddam Hussein to release his captives. The war in the gulf is not over until the hostages that Saddam Hussein is holding have been released.

The United States should not normalize relations with the regime in Iraq until these innocent people, the sons and the daughters, the husbands and the wives of the people of Kuwait have been released by their Iraqi captors.

KUWAITIS STILL BEING HELD PRISONER BY IRAQ

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

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure tonight to join with the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. CURT WELDON. The gentleman and I have both been active in working with the Kuwaitis on this issue.

Most people do not even understand that there are hundreds of people being held by Saddam Hussein in Iraq, who are just innocent women and children, husbands and wives, men and women, just ordinary Kuwaitis who have been whisked away by the Iraqi Army during the Gulf War and have never been returned.

It is one-tenth of 1 percent of the population of Kuwait that is still being held by Saddam Hussein. That is the equivalent in the United States of 250,000 people being held prisoner by a foreign hostile power.

□ 1915

The United States can be proud and we Americans can be proud in particular of the role that we played in freeing the people of Kuwait from the aggression of Saddam Hussein and from the hold of Saddam Hussein. We can be proud that our soldiers, our men and women marched off and struggled for peace and freedom and succeeded. But the job is not done when the equivalent of 250,000 Kuwaitis are still in the hands of Saddam Hussein. One thing that we can be proud of, we won the war against Saddam Hussein. We won it. In fact, I was just in Kuwait several months ago and they have initiated democratic reforms in that country that seem to make it all worthwhile. They now have free newspapers and radios and criticism of the government, opposition parties. This is one of the highlights of the Middle East. This is a shining example of what happens when people really do want to try to set up a free society. The human rights abuses that Kuwait used to be known for have somewhat disappeared. But now they turn around, the people of Kuwait, their sons and their daughters are gone. Their husbands and wives are missing. Over 600 people are missing. The United States should make it clear that there will be no normalization of relations with Iraq until those prisoners are released.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON].

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. I would just add for the record that as I mentioned earlier, we also include nationals from nine other nations who are being held illegally by Iraq. These are not all Kuwaitis, these were people living in Kuwait, but some of them were actually of the nationality of nine other countries which include India, Bahrain, Oman, the Philippines, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. There is a total of nine other nations. And we are not just talking about military personnel, we are talking about 29 people from the private sector, we are talking about 128 students, students that were taken away from Kuwait, their parents have no idea where they are or what happened to them. We are talking about 3 housewives, 18 retired people, and 26 who are unemployed. So it was across the broad spectrum. These are ordinary people.

Kuwait's point is and the world community's point should be if these people have been killed, then Iraq should come forward and say they have been killed. They should tell the families the whereabouts of these individuals. But that has not happened. We should not sit still while this atrocity continues.

I thank my colleague for joining me and for yielding to me.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. As I say, we have every reason to be proud of what the United States did during the gulf war to protect Kuwait and the other people of the Middle East against aggression. We have every reason to be proud of Kuwait since then because they have become a more democratized system. They have more of a functioning, representative government and they have reached out to end human rights abuses and moved forward to establish freedoms they did not have before.

We can also be very proud of the Kuwaitis for what they did when they were being held hostage and occupied by Saddam Hussein. They in fact risked their lives, common Kuwaitis risked their lives to protect the lives of American citizens who happened to be in Kuwait at the time that Saddam Hussein invaded. Just as the Kuwaiti people risked their lives for those Americans they did not even know, we should tonight make it our business to tell Saddam Hussein and the regime in Iraq that those Kuwaitis who they hold must be released and we must think about them. We may not know them but we know the Kuwaiti people risked their lives for Americans they did not know. Let us pay that courtesy back and insist that Saddam Hussein release all those prisoners.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, for tonight's special order, the topic that I would like to address is campaign finance reform.

I wanted to point out that today at a press conference that was held by several of the women members of the Democratic Caucus, they basically urged Speaker GINGRICH and the Republican leadership to stop the delay on campaign finance reform, and I know that some of the Members who were at that press conference will be joining me tonight to discuss the issue.

Obviously campaign finance reform is certainly not a new issue to Members of this House or to the American people. The Democrats have been leaders on this issue for several years and the Republicans, I believe, have been obstructionists. As I mentioned in my remarks to the House this morning, for the past five Congresses the Republican leadership has pulled every legislative maneuver known to the Congress to keep campaign finance reform bills from becoming law. Now of course there is a renewed interest in the issue, and of course the flaws that the campaign finance system and that the Democrats have highlighted for years are becoming more prevalent and the American people have had enough. According to one poll, 85 percent of the American people think the campaign finance system is now in a crisis state. I have to point out, though, it did not have to come to this. If reforms the Democrats have been proposing since 1989 had been in place today, the country might well have been spared the abuses and excesses that we are hearing about. Unfortunately the Republicans stopped us cold. They have delayed and filibustered and stalled in really every conceivable way on this issue. I just wanted to point out, and then I would like to yield to my colleague from Hawaii, that on the first day of this session of Congress, every single House Republican voted against requiring action on campaign reform in the first 100 days of the new Congress. That was rollcall vote No. 4. Then when the President and the congressional leaders met in February, Republican leaders rejected the Democrats' suggestion that campaign finance reform join the priority list for bipartisan action. In the agenda Republicans laid out for the 105th Congress on March 6, their stated position is the status quo, to ensure that current laws are followed and enforced and require full and timely disclosure of all campaign contributions. Specifically in the case of the Speaker who testified before the House Oversight Committee on November 2, 1995, he said, quote, he would emphasize far more money in the political process.

Recently one of our colleagues from the Senate, MITCH MCCONNELL, stated, ''We're not spending too much on politics in America. This whole notion that we're spending too much on politics is nonsense.''

Clearly again the Republicans are in the majority and they have done nothing to suggest that they will be willing to move on campaign finance reform this session.

I would like to yield now to my colleague the gentlewoman from Hawaii [Mrs. MINK] who was one of the Democratic women Members who participated in this press conference today.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

The press conference that the Democratic women held at noon today was to emphasize our great frustration at the failure of the leadership to schedule even hearings at the committee level on this very critical problem. Any blind person, I think, could realize that the whole system is in crisis and it is really up to us. No one else can change it. No one else can fix it. It is up to the Congress of the United States to take this issue and to hear all the different versions. I am not certain exactly where I am going to stand in the final analysis on many of these aspects of the reform legislation, but I do think it is time to start, and so the women gathered today to make a special appeal to the country to contact the leadership of this House and to stress the point that they, the public, is really exhausted with their patience in waiting for this Chamber to begin its deliberations.

Last night, the Speaker took the floor during special orders and outlined a 13-point program in which he explained in great detail in his 1-hour special order exactly what positions and programs the Republicans were supporting. I listened the entire hour because my special order came afterwards, and I was astounded that he did not include mention of campaign finance reform, something which really goes to the very heart of our democracy. It is challenging the viability, the essence of our democracy, all the things that we read about. When $2.7 billion is being spent in campaigns to elect us and the President, something is strictly wrong, and we need to fix it. There have been a lot of different suggestions that have come forward and the gentleman in the well pointed out to me a short little column which I am sure he will explain later in detail from the National Journal on March 13, reported that a group of political science professors forming a task force by the Citizens Research Foundation came up with certain recommendations on campaign reform. They are saying, ''Put aside all the stuff that you have been debating in the past. Start anew. Look at this problem fresh.'' And I think that is a very interesting approach and something which this House probably ought to consider.

We have had no hearings yet. There are investigations which I certainly support. One of the reporters asked at our press conference, well, does it mean since we are pushing for campaign reform that we are minimizing the importance of the investigations of the past activities?

Certainly not. We want to see those investigations carry forth. But they have no ending if we at the same time are not considering ways in which we can make the system better, bring back the importance of ordinary people, not big financial contributions.

The campaign reform report that the Citizens Research Foundation task force recommended said, abolish soft money. I totally agree with that. And many of the suggestions that have come forward have made that suggestion. I do not know if it will be in the final form. I hope so. I have introduced a bill to do exactly that. I do not think the American public out there wants to read in the paper night after night about contributions coming in to the various party organizations, of $500,000, $600,000, maybe cumulatively over a 2-year period of $1 million. Something has gone amuck if we tolerate that kind of interventions of big money into a political process that should belong to the ordinary citizen.

The gentleman and I running for Congress operate under severe limits. Our individual contributions are limited to $1,000 for the primary, $1,000 for the general. We have PAC contributions that come to us, but they are limited, $5,000 in the primary, $5,000 in the general. Why can the others in our society that want to participate in a different way, not to our campaigns but to our parties or to independent organizations not operate under the same rules, $1,000 for individuals and $5,000 for the larger entities or committees that are contributing? I think that is fair.

The Supreme Court's decision with regard to campaign contributions was that the limitations on how much people can give is a perfectly legitimate limitation, and we operate under that. No one has said those limitations are not proper or are unconstitutional. We have lived under it for many, many years.

What the Supreme Court has been challenging as a free limitation is the spending end and that brings into picture a much more difficult part of this whole reform effort. But for the moment, it seems to me the people are concentrating on the whole idea of these uncontrolled contributions, and the court has never said that we cannot establish limits there.

And so I support this task force report. It is remarkably in line with what I think. But that is really not the point of my presence here tonight, because myself together with the other women who joined in the press conference are not championing any particular reform or particular items. What we want to see is the beginning of serious consideration of this issue, putting it on the priority list, for instance, that the Speaker came to the well last night to announce to the American people. Why is it not on his agenda for America? Americans are concerned about it. The pollsters are telling us 85 percent of the Americans think there is a crisis today in campaign spending and campaign contributions. And so what this tells us and

what our mail certainly tells us, what the phone calls are telling us that are coming in from our districts, we better pay heed. The American people are really disillusioned about this process and we cannot afford to let this go by unattended.

Again I join the gentleman who is doing a wonderful job in leading us in this whole effort about campaign reform, to get with it and call upon the Speaker and the leadership to bring this matter to a head, call the hearings, let us have a chance to express ourselves on behalf of our constituents, bring together both sides, call task forces, bring in the parties. They do not want to give up this opportunity to raise large money. We cannot expect them to come in with voluntary solutions, voluntary limits.

□ 1930

It is time for us to enact laws to safeguard that very precious element of the public's right to really participate in the electoral process, and they cannot if they are swamped by big money.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me tonight.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Hawaii and particularly in your pointing out that after all we, as Democrats, are in the minority here. What we are asking is that the majority, the Republican majority and their leadership, bring this issue to the forefront and make it a priority, and, as you mentioned, they have had several opportunities to do that: first with the President who called for this issue to come to the floor and be resolved by July 4; and then there were bipartisan meetings at the White House, and once again the Republicans refused to put it on a priority list; and now the Speaker has come forward again, and it is not on the priority list of his agenda for this Congress.

All we are asking is that this be prioritized and a date certain be set when it is going to come to the floor, and, as you know already, some of our colleagues, some of our Democratic colleagues, have started to use procedural motions, motions to adjourn, on other bills to try to make this point because that is really the only avenue we have to make the point to speak out and say that it must come forward.

I just want to mention one more thought that you pointed out and I think, as we have been saying, we just want to bring this issue up and we want it to be heard. We have not necessarily come up with a specific proposal about how to address it. But you made a very good point when you said that when it comes to our individual races for Congress we have very strict requirements in terms of how much money we can raise, a thousand for individuals, $5,000 for PAC's, and all of that has to be disclosed.

And when you look at this report that was done by the Citizens Research Foundation at the University of Southern California, one of the points that they make in their summary, and of course it is endless and you know we are not going to be able to go through it all tonight, is that they are very concerned about the lack of disclosure for sources and receipt of money outside the confines of individual races. They talk about the issue advocacy now, the independent expenditures, issue advocacy being done by party committees, independent expenditures being done by various organizations, and in each case the biggest problem there is lack of disclosure. And I think that is one of the things that I think is almost universal. Regardless of what program or bill comes to the floor, the real problem is that one of the major problems is once you go outside of our individual races, disclosure is much more difficult, it is more difficult to track where the money is coming from and where it is going to.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. If the gentleman will yield, that is precisely the point why the public is so disillusioned, because this matter is being disclosed in the newspaper. Nobody has access to the records. We cannot go anywhere to see the degree to which this type of fundraising has gone on and who has contributed. We wait every day for new announcements.

That is simply not the way to preserve democracy in America, so I really commend the gentleman for his point. It is very, very critical to this debate.

Mr. PALLONE. Well, thank you, and I see my colleague from Connecticut, Ms. DELAURO, who joins with me on a regular basis here. I would like to yield to her. I know she has made a major point of this issue of campaign finance reform.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for taking up this special order tonight, and I am sorry I was not here for the first part of the dialog, but I think in what I have been listening to, the issue of the 1996 elections, I think it was clear that the 1996 elections prove that there is too much money in politics.

What does it mean when you say that? It means that there is too much influence for special interests, not enough representation for people who work hard every single day and who want government to represent their views and their needs, and government is not in a sense an abstract concept. Government means that they want the people who they have elected to represent them, to make sure that their views are put forward.

I wanted to join with you tonight just simply to say that I want to call on the leadership of this House to take action to reform our campaign finance system. Again I am sorry that the 1996 elections were record breaking in what I view as the wrong way. The final tallies reported in the Washington Post show that the campaign was the most expensive ever with an estimated cost of $2.7 billion. If we were to adjust for inflation, spending on campaigns tripled during the past 20 years, and what they reinforced was that we need less money in our political system.

Now if you take a look at the leadership of the House, Speaker GINGRICH thinks that we should have more money in the political system. The majority leader of the House believes that there should be more money in the system. The majority whip believes that there should be more money in the system. The former head of the Republican National Committee believes that there ought to be more money. Now I am not making that up. Those are statements that are on the record.

So, in fact, there is a philosophical difference in terms of the Republican leadership wanting more money in the process, and a Democratic position in the House has been to see limitations put on the amount of money spent in the process. The Washington Post further showed that 8 in 10 Americans agree that the money has too much influence on who wins elections. When you take a look at what the preponderance of views are amongst the Republican leadership, you can see that there is that tie on why we see a refusal, if you will, to bring campaign finance reform to a vote, and I have to believe it is a sincerely held view that they do not think that there is a problem with the role that money plays in the American political system.

I think that the American public believes differently from that, as I am sure that you have talked about and our colleague from Hawaii is talking about, but I think it is so real to the American public that there is too much money in the system. I think it has been reflected in their staying away from the polls in their, if you will, disappointment and potentially even their disgust with government. They have little faith in government. You know, in terms of staying away from the polls, we have had less than half of those eligible to vote voted last November.

One 50-year-old woman in the article who said she might expect to live to age 80 said, ''I will be dead in the ground long before anything changes.'' It is a sad day if her words accurately reflect our perceived ability to tackle the challenge of campaign finance reform.

I think we have a wonderful opportunity here, and that opportunity is to restore faith in the Government, in the Congress. But in order to do that we have to prove that we are serious about reforming campaign finance and that we have to do that now. Waiting would push campaign finance reform efforts closer to the next election season and likely doom campaign finance efforts as happened in past Congresses.

I was pleased that the President, in his State of the Union message, talked about a realistic challenge for the Congress, and that is to pass campaign finance reform by the Fourth of July.

Lest their be any confusion about what we are talking about here tonight, I would just say very forthrightly that we do have investigations underway and if there was any wrongdoing, then in fact wrongdoing should be punished. No one is suggesting that that is not the case. I think very honestly, and investigations will go on, but what we need to do is to—we know that the system needs to be reformed. So let us have the opportunity to debate the number of initiatives that already on both sides of the aisle have been brought to the table, including the Meehan-Shays bill and the Senate Feingold—the Feingold-McCain bill. Our colleague from California, SAM FARR has a good working piece of legislation. There have been two constitutional amendments that have been introduced or that you put a limitation on the amount of money that is spent to contravene a Supreme Court decision a number of years ago. So that we have opportunities here to have a debate, and a number of people have talked about, you know, different pieces which can be debated so that in fact we can come to some consensus on both sides of the aisle about how we ought to be raising money for campaigns in the future.

I think if we can use the goal post of July 4, it is a decent period of time in which to have the debate, and it is also symbolically, I think, very important in terms of it being Independence Day in that we, in fact, you know, wrest the control of our campaigns from the special interests and return it back to the people. And I would urge the House leadership to move to campaign finance reform by that time, and we can start working now at this effort.

I was proud to join my Democratic colleagues. The women, Democratic women of the House, today had a press conference to talk about this issue to have a full debate, which I am sure my colleague from Hawaii talked about. I understand that Members of the freshman class on both sides of the aisle, a bipartisan effort is underway to talk about how we can move this forward.

I am a cosponsor of our colleague Sam Farr's bill. I think there have been some good suggestions about the broadcasters and issuing free time, especially in light of what is going on with the sale of the spectrum in which the broadcasters are going to reap, you know, myriad of benefits. Therefore, in fact, they could talk about free airtime to candidates. I think there are some good measures is essentially what I am saying, and I know my colleague from New Jersey feels the same about this.

And let us take this opportunity to take some of these good measures to develop consensus on this issue and move forward to meaningful campaign finance reform. I think it would do so much for our ability to go to the American public and say, ''We're responding to what you are talking about with your disgust and with your lack of faith.'' Let us do this, and let us talk and then allow them to believe us when we talk about wanting to ensure, making sure that 10 million kids in this country have health insurance, which they now do not have, and that we are serious about doing something about their ability to be able to send their kids to school and so forth. I think it would go a long way in restoring faith in what we do in this body.

So, as my colleague has also called for, I join him in calling for the passage of campaign finance reform as soon as possible. But first and foremost let us have the debate and the hearings that are necessary in order that we can pass campaign finance reform, and I thank you for calling this special order.

Mr. PALLONE. I thank you too and, you know, I think that one of the things that you pointed out which is, I think, very sad, and of course I do not buy it, is that many people do believe, and I hear it all the time, that we are just never going to see this, it is not possible for Members of the House of Representatives to limit campaign finance reform. It is not going to happen, it is not in their interests, they will not do it. And of course I have been here long enough to know that the reality is around this place fortunately because it is a democracy, and we are representatives, that if people demand that certain action be taken on this floor, it will be taken, and I need to, you know, stress that again. I think our colleagues all understand and I think the people should understand that if there is enough pressure, if people speak out and they feel strongly that there needs to be reform, and I think that is the sentiment out there now, this House will take action, and I think that the President's proposal to have a date certain—he mentioned July 4—is really what we need. We need to set a deadline and say, OK, this is when we are going to do it, and we need to have Republican leadership basically come forward and say July 4 is going to be the deadline or whatever the deadline is.

You mentioned a few things though that I just wanted to add to, if I could, when Congresswoman MINK was here from Hawaii and we talked a little bit about disclosure and the need to have disclosure. You stressed the problem of too much money in the system and the need for spending limit which I think, as much as disclosure is important, the need for spending limit is also important. And I have been very upset really to hear some of the leadership and some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle talk about how there is not enough money in campaigns. And we mentioned before, I think, on the—in the other body Senator MCCONNELL who stated just recently we are not spending too much on politics in America. His whole notion that we are spending too much is nonsense. That is simply not the case. We are spending too much.

I mean there is a need for some kind of spending limit. I think that has to be the heart of this thing. And also again the cynicism with regard to small donors. I have people come up to me now and say, ''Well, why should I contribute $5 or $10 or even $100 to the campaign?'' You know, this is all big money now. This is $1,000, $5,000, $10,000, a million—you know, depending on whether it is going to a national committee or independents. This is big money; the little guy does not matter.

□ 1945

That is not true and we need to dispel that. I think that a spending limit could go far to dispel that.

What I would like to see, just my own view, not even in a bill form, but I really think that if we had a spending limit, and we said, say it was $5,000, which really is a lot of money, but that could be a limit, I just take it out of a hat, and then we say that we will use existing means, we can still have $1,000 for individuals and $5,000 for PAC's, but we have some requirement of small donor contributions, either small donor individuals, or small donor PAC's, and then we couple that with public financing. I know it probably is the case that the majority of the Members of this body are not in favor of public financing. I happen to be in favor of it.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, so am I.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I think that if we take a spending limit and we then require a small amount of donations and then we still have larger donations, individual donations and PAC's, and then we have a public mechanism to match it, that would go far toward keeping the amount of money down and also making people understand that the small donations really are meaningful in this process, which I think that they are. However, again, the issue right now for us is not what the reform is going to be, but that we need to address reform.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, that is the point. We did pass a bill in this House, and then when it went over to the Senate and the current Senator from Kentucky, who is still of the view that there is not enough money in politics, filibustered it and in the last session it was turned away. In a prior session when it was passed in this House, the then President George Bush vetoed the legislation.

The fact is that we passed here spending limits. We need to limit the amount of money it takes to run for a congressional seat or a Senate seat.

There are differences with regard to public financing. I support public financing, a voluntary, that is nobody should be coerced, or the other pieces, the ban on soft money which is in the Farr bill, which I support, a ban on soft money. These are all pieces, again, the constitutional pieces, the broadcasters you can deal with. We have to get to the point where we can have a good,

hard debate on these issues, and a place in which they can unfold so that we can try to come to some consensus and viewpoint as to what we ought to pass.

Without that debate, we are not going to see anything happen here. We are just going to go along and the public will be reconfirmed in their view that this body is not able to police itself or to look at ways in which the amount of money can be curtailed.

There are a number of ways in which we can go after this goal. What there has to be is the willingness and the will, if you will, or the political will, to determine that we are going to pass meaningful campaign finance reform and that we are going to take it on.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I agree. The gentlewoman did mention this idea with regard to the broadcast time, and if I could just develop that a little bit more, because I think that is important. One of the proposals that has been laid out is with regard to premier time for political ads.

The gentlewoman is in Connecticut and I am in New Jersey, so we are both in the New York metropolitan area. Members who live in the New York metropolitan area know how expensive the radio and TV market is for New York. If one is in New Jersey and one is running statewide for Senate, for example, one has to contend with not only New York, but Philadelphia; in both cases very expensive markets for TV time.

So I think that when the President recently suggested linking free broadcast time to the stations' interest in some of the spectrum, or I guess it is this digital high definition television, these licenses that are now being put forth, I thought that was particularly interesting.

There was an article in the New York Times on March 13, just a few days ago, and if I could just bring out a couple of points in that. It said, ''Supporters of free political ads have proposed a national political time bank into which every radio and TV station would deposit one or two hours of prime advertising time for each two-year political cycle.'' It says, ''Based on the $500 million and the time back, the Federal Election Commission would dispense vouchers redeemable at any station. Half the vouchers would go to qualifying congressional candidates * * * Using vouchers, candidates could buy blocks of time at any station during any program, and such flexibility is critical, because different campaigns have different audiences.''

The way I understand the President's proposal, he asks that broadcasters surrender time to candidates in exchange for new licenses to provide this digital high definition TV.

The President said that the free broadcast time would take the pressure off candidates to raise money, obviously, and the time bank would reimburse stations that provided more than 1 or 2 hours worth of free time using money from the stations that provided fewer.

I thought it was an interesting proposal. Again, this is something that the President put forward. We obviously can debate it. If we look at one of the reasons why so much money has to be raised, particularly I think for races in the other body, but also for many in the House, it is because of the cost of TV time in these very expensive markets. This would go far toward alleviating some of that problem.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I think most campaigns, and this is across the board, if we talk to anyone on both sides of the aisle about where the bulk of their money goes in a campaign, and it is to pay for the TV costs, for the broadcast costs.

I was just looking at an article from the Hartford, CT, paper, which actually said what the broadcasters could do here in terms of what they are about to reap in profit from the sale here and the licenses is that they ought to give back something and take on some responsibility here in terms of the free air time. I think we ought to move in that direction, because the costs obviously vary in different parts of the country, but the fact of the matter is that we do run for reelection and we do have to raise money. But whenever we are listening to people, it is mostly because the volume of money that they are trying to raise has to do with trying to be on TV and to pay those costs. Even some of the solicitations from Members to folks that they want contributing to their campaigns, say such and such an amount of money will allow me to be on television so many times, so that that is where the bulk of the money is being spent. I think we need to take a very, very hard look at that and a look at the various proposals that are on the table with regard to that issue.

I think what we have to do on this is do what similarly was done with regard to the minimum wage legislation in the last session of the Congress, and that is to use every opportunity that we can on this floor to raise the issue. Some Members were engaged in that effort last week. I suspect that they will continue to try to raise the issue.

This has now been, what is it, January, February, March, and there have been letters. I do not know if it has been mentioned before, but a bipartisan list of Members sent a letter to the leadership asking that campaign finance reform be made a high priority, and so far we have seen nothing as an opportunity for us to move in this direction.

So what we need to do is to utilize the opportunities that this institution offers to raise the issue continuously so in fact we can have some meaningful dialog on this issue.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I have noticed, I am certainly not an expert on it, but if we look at some other countries in Western Europe and other democracies, many of them do in fact have the free TV time or the free newspaper time or whatever. It is not an unusual thing to do that. In fact, I think it is very common in a lot of other democracies. So there are precedents for doing that, and I think we need to look at some of these precedents in deciding what kind of a forum we should make.

I guess we are running out of time, but I just wanted to finish our special order.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman has his special order next, so I am not going to yield to him at this time.

Mr. GEKAS. The gentleman is not going to yield to me?

Mr. PALLONE. No, I am not.

Mr. GEKAS. I feel offended. There is certain blame being cast here that I wish we could rebut at this time. I am offended.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I did mention earlier this report on this task force of campaign finance reform that came out from the Citizens Research Foundation of the University of Southern California, and this is something that we could talk about and we probably can discuss more as we go on, but it is called New Realities, New Thinking. I think the one thing that it points out that I am thinking about a lot, because I think it made me rethink the whole idea of what we need for campaign finance reform, is it says that ''Campaign finance today is characterized by an expanding political arena in which significant amounts of money flow in new and constantly changing ways.''

This is a quote.

> We have gone from a process where parties ran campaigns to an area where candidates ran their own campaigns and now we are experiencing a much more dynamic, diffuse funding system in which a broad range of political entities, political parties, individuals, PAC's, issue organizations and others spend money in campaigns that candidates neither raise nor control.

The report indicates that these new realities, basically, raise serious questions about accountability, electoral competitiveness, the sources of campaign funds and resources. So you are thinking new realities, and what they are saying is that the nature of campaigns have changed dramatically in the last few years, with the issue advocacy, with the independent expenditures, and I think that that is the reason why there is a need for reform, because there is so much more money now and it is going in so many different ways. We do not know where it is coming from, disclosure, enforcement, all of these things that were mechanisms that we relied upon in the past where we were only dealing with our own campaigns, this is increasingly a thing of the past.

That is why the system cries out for reform. There need to be changes. We just cannot pretend that we are living with a system that we lived with 5 years ago or 10 years ago. It is not the same anymore. So that is why I think that we need to continue with our effort to say that this campaign finance

reform issue has to be addressed on the floor.

I just want to thank the gentlewoman again. I know this is just the beginning of our effort to make sure that this issue is raised by the GOP leadership and that we do have the time when it is considered.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY, 176 YEARS OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to honor the spirit of freedom by commemorating 176 years of Greek independence. March 25 is Greek Independence Day, and every year I speak on the House floor to recognize this important historical event.

The significance of Greek Independence Day can never be overstated. Like the Fourth of July, it continues to remind all of us to honor freedom regardless of the price.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, my very good friend and colleague [Mr. GEKAS], at this point.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. We have grown accustomed to the gentleman from Florida and his repetitive and necessary emphasis on Greek Independence Day and its celebration throughout the world.

The most noteworthy part of the celebration in which Americans of Greek descent yearly participate has to do, in my judgment, with the historical partnership of the American democracy and the way our country, the United States, gained its independence, and that which followed in the 1820's when the Greek nationals began their movement for independence.

□ 2000

What was the common bond that the American institution of independence had with its later Greek movement for independence in the 1820's? It was their own Greek heritage. That is, the ideals of democracy and self-government which were first practiced by the classical Greeks were the foundation for the Jeffersons and Madisons and the Adamses and the Washingtons as they moved strenuously to bring their country into a mode of freedom. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that followed all were based in the authorship of the American Founders themselves, founded on the principles of classical Greek democracy, Athenian democracy.

And so 50 years later, when Greece itself felt the need to overthrow the yoke of Turkish domination, they were harking back to two historical events: First, the American independence movement and, still further back, in which both democracies had relied so heavily, the classical Greek democracy.

So how did I learn this lesson? In the parochial setting of our Greek school, church-related studies, it became evident to me that America was as much a part of the Greek revolution in 1821 as was the raising of the flag by Father Germanos and all the heroic exploits of the great generals of Greek independence.

As a matter of fact, in the city of Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, the public officials of that day in the 1820's spoke mightily of the need for the international community to come to the aid of the Greek independence movement. And in fact President Monroe, on many occasions, was insistent upon American spiritual and moral and material aid for the potential overthrow of the Turkish domination of Greece.

Members of the House of Representatives in which we stand tonight were eloquent in their phraseology of freedom, just as the gentleman from Florida began his dissertation this evening, with the celebration of freedom. His predecessors and mine on the floor of the House of Representatives in the 1820's were repetitive and strongly exhortative of the movement of freedom on the Greek mainland.

So when the gentleman says, as he does rightly, that this is a celebration of freedom, it is a celebration of American freedom just as much as it is this small setting of Greek independence that arose in the 1820's. That is what makes it so extraordinarily valuable to us of Greek descent, Americans of Greek descent. Here we are, privileged enough to be Members of the Congress of the United States where our every day, our every breath is spent in trying to improve our country, the United States. And it happens that our heritage, the parents that we had who came from another world and from another era, were able to inculcate in us the spirit of freedom and independence and democracy which they and their forefathers knew so well in their country of origin, and then they make sure that we in our education, in our commitment to faith, in our interrelationships with our fellow Americans, that we never forget that the spirit of freedom that began with that wonderful Athenian democracy can be practiced by their sons and daughters on the very floor of the most, the strongest station of freedom that the world has ever known, the Congress of the United States.

I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. He is always so very eloquent on all subjects, I might add.

I now yield to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAPPAS], one of our newest Members of the House, very welcome here.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today and join my distinguished colleague and dear friend from Florida in recognizing the great achievement of the 176th anniversary of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Over 200 years ago, America's Founding Fathers turned to Greece, the birthplace of democracy, as an idol in setting the course as a new nation. It was only fitting that Greece in turn look to the United States 50 years later as a role model for democratic government after struggling under the oppressive Ottoman Empire.

Living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire fostered a revolutionary spirit in its people who had been subjected to decades of slavery, abuse, and cultural deprivation. It is this spirit that we recognize today. We recognize the spirit of Greeks that have gone on before, the Greeks that have brought so much to this country and those Greek-Americans living here today.

A well-known Greek revolutionary who was burned alive by the Turks said in one of his famous poems that ''I would rather live free for one hour than suffer slavery and imprisonment for 40 years.''

The United States-Greek relationship is among our strongest. Greece has fought by the side of the United States in numerous tests throughout the years. Both countries share a passion for freedom. Greece has sent some of its brightest to the shores of America to pursue dreams in this, the land of opportunity.

My grandparents emigrated to the United States of America early in this century. My mother's parents, Stelios and Olga Macaronis, were born in a village called Atsiki on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea. My paternal grandmother, Anastasia Pappas, was from Athens, and my father's father, whose name was Mike Pappas, was born in Smyrna, which is now part of Turkey.

They worked hard to learn the language and supported a growing family. They became U.S. citizens. They started businesses. They had children and, yes, they had grandchildren. One of these grandchildren today is a Member of the U.S. Congress.

The United States has given our Greek-American family the opportunity to see these dreams come through. As a Member of this Congress, I share the responsibility to ensure that the opportunity for the realization of these types of dreams will always be possible for others.

Winning the election last year to the U.S. Congress was a great responsibility or is a great responsibility and honor. However, in reading the papers the day after the election, my favorite pictures are not the ones with me and my supporters at the election celebration. It was the pictures of me taking my grandmother, Olga Macaronis, to vote just as I have done for many years.

My grandmother, Olga Macaronis, is 94 years old today, and I do not think that she has ever missed an election in