

INTRODUCTION OF THE PUBLIC
VOICE CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT
OF 1997

HON. HAROLD E. FORD, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 1997

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the 105th Congress, the President challenged Congress to enact campaign finance reform legislation before the Fourth of July. As we approach this landmark date, Congress has yet to hold the first hearing on campaign finance reform legislation. At the same time, both political parties continue to aggressively solicit soft money from corporate donors, while the Federal Election Commission, the body charged by Congress with enforcing our election laws is starved for cash and is immobilized by partisan gridlock.

Today, I will introduce campaign finance reform legislation to strengthen enforcement of election laws, increase disclosure, ban soft money and provide reduced broadcast time to political candidates. For too long, the Federal Election Commission has been a paper tiger in a jungle of money-dominated campaigns. President Clinton has stated that in order to clean up campaigns and strengthen the FEC, "we need a clean break from the past." This legislation gives us a chance to break from the past by requiring the President to appoint an independent seventh Commissioner recommended by the existing six members. The seventh Commissioner would serve as Chairman, and all of the Commissioners would be limited to one 6 year term. Under the current law, the Commission is split evenly between Democrats and Republicans.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow the FEC to charge a filing fee for candidates, political committees and parties who meet minimum thresholds of financial activity. This provision will give the agency a degree of financial independence that the Congress refuses to give it in annual appropriations. It has been endorsed by the eminent scholars Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute.

The bill also restores the FEC's ability to conduct random audits of candidates, PACs and parties, and allows the Commission to refer a case to the Justice Department as soon as the FEC believes there may have been criminal activity. These two provisions and others in the bill have been recommended by the author is of the respected University of Southern California campaign finance study entitled *New Realities, New Thinking*.

The pervasive influence of money in politics, especially soft money, has tainted our political process and threatens to eclipse the fundamental principle that every person's vote counts the same. I applaud the President's recent call to strengthen the FEC and ban soft money, Mr. Speaker. Now it is time for the Congress to act. This legislation will restore fairness to our political process by banning soft money.

Further, it will require broadcasters, who stand to benefit from the use of digital airwaves—channels which belong to the public—to fulfill their public interest obligations by offering reduced television time to political candidates. In the past 25 years, spending by po-

litical candidates and political committees has risen dramatically. In 1972, candidates spent \$25 million on television advertising. In 1996, candidates spent \$500 million on political advertising. The high cost of television advertising requires candidates and incumbents to spend a disproportionate amount of time raising money, has increased the influence of special interests, makes it difficult for challenges to compete with incumbents, and interferes with candidates' efforts to communicate with voters.

In the 1996 election cycle, over \$2 billion was spent on Federal elections. Over \$266 million of this was in unregulated soft money. This constituted a 224% increase in soft money spending by the Republicans and a 257% increase by Democrats. Soft money has become the legal loophole through which candidates and parties are driving a mack truck, and it is time to close this loophole once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, 22 years ago Congress created the Federal Election Commission because, in the words of the agency's charter, "our representative form of government needed protection from the corrosive influence of unlimited and undisclosed political contributions." As we approach the celebration of our nation's birth, let's give the American people a gift that will stem their distrust and cynicism of our political system. Let's fulfill the obligation we made to them in 1975 by enacting meaningful campaign finance reform legislation.

IN MEMORY OF MISSOURI NEWS-
MAN WILLIAM LESTER "LES"
SIMPSON

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 1997

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, June 16, 1997, the State of Missouri lost a distinguished citizen. William Lester "Les" Simpson of Odessa, MO, passed away in Lexington, MO at the age of 88.

In 1926, Mr. Simpson started a lifelong career in the news business at his father's *Rolla (MO) Times*. In 1944, he and his wife Madeline bought the *Holden Progress*, where he became publisher. In 1990, they moved to Odessa, where he resided until his death.

Mr. Simpson was a member of the Missouri Press Association, serving as president in 1957, and the Central Missouri Press Association, of which he was president in 1950. He was inducted into the MPA Hall of Fame in 1992. He was also the recipient of distinguished service awards from Northeast, Northwest, and Central Missouri press associations and received the Merrill Chilcote Award in 1995 from the Northwest Missouri Press Association. Mr. Simpson also served on the board of regents at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, MO from 1959–77, serving as board vice president from 1961–65, and president from 1965–71. He received the CMSU Distinguished Service Award in 1995.

Mr. Simpson was a 50-year member of the Holden Masonic Lodge and Order of Eastern Star. He was past president and member of the Holden Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Ararat Shrine of Kansas City.

He was preceded in death by his wife Madeline in 1992, as well as three brothers and

one sister. He is survived by a daughter, Betty Spaar of Odessa, who continues in her father's footsteps as the publisher of the newspaper, *The Odessan*. Also surviving are three sisters, five grandchildren, and a great-grandson. I know that this body joins me in expressing sympathy to the family of this outstanding Missourian.

HAPPY 150TH BIRTHDAY TO THE
CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 1997

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker. One of the legislative accomplishments of which I am most proud is my role, along with others in the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, in securing passage last year of the legislation which created a national park in the City of New Bedford, commemorating the City's crucial role as a world whaling center. The fact that New Bedford played a leading role in the history of whaling is of course chronicled most famously in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, but, although the whaling industry has long since moved elsewhere and now largely come to an end, the city is still a remarkable storehouse of information on the history of whaling, and the establishment of the national park will bring that story to millions of visitors in the coming years.

While the people of New Bedford are looking forward to sharing that history—and the many other important contributions their city has made to American culture—they have been celebrating their history on their own for decades. In fact, I was honored to have had the chance to participate in a parade in April in honor of the 150th anniversary of New Bedford's incorporation as a city, an event attended by more than 50,000 people. Of course New Bedford as a community has existed much longer than 150 years, but it is surely no accident that its incorporation as a city dates to the heyday of the whaling industry there. Since 1847, New Bedford, like so many other American cities, has gone through many changes and many stages of economic development, but its residents have continued to work to make the city a better place to live, while still preserving its wonderful history.

And New Bedford has been an extraordinary city indeed. Beyond its role in the whaling industry, New Bedford has been the home of many "firsts" and other important events in American history, and I would like to take note of several. It is no surprise that the city was involved in a number of key maritime events, including, in the 1770s, the construction of *Old Ironsides* by George Claghorn, a New Bedford resident and ship builder. Also, in 1783, the *American Ship Bedford*, owned by William Rotch, Jr. of New Bedford, became the first vessel to display the American flag in English waters. And, it was in 1896 that the city's Joshua Slocum competed the first solo trip around the world in his sloop "Spray."

The city also played a key role in the fight for an end to slavery, and for fair treatment generally of African Americans. It was an important site on the Underground Railroad, and in 1838, a fugitive slave and his wife traveled to New Bedford from Newport, Rhode Island