Middle East. I am particularly impressed how President Clinton has dealt with the situation in Northern Ireland, the new Prime Minister of England, Tony Blair, and others who have been so aggressive in working on peace, peace in the northern portion of Ireland. It is as a result of all parties being brought forward at the table to talk seriously about peace in those regions. That will be the only way we will see peace in the Middle East, is if the parties join together in a pursuit of peace. That includes Yasser Arafat, that includes the Israelis, that includes everyone who is in the region, to start absolutely sitting down to negotiate peace so we can end the bloodshed, end the terror, end the endless killings that are taking place against innocent citizens who just want to live life and are being and having their lives destroyed.

I want to commend Secretary Albright for her engagement there and for her stern words today to end terrorism. I urge her to continue that profile, and I urge the White House to do the same so that we can hopefully eliminate the scourge of terrorism in that region of the world.

The President is going to be requesting fast track authority to our Latin American neighbors. The Florida delegation met today. We had some very serious concerns of granting additional fast track authority to any other nation. Let me speak for myself and not the delegation, because I have significant concerns about what has happened as a result of NAFTA. I can go down the litany of problems we have experienced since NAFTA was passed. We can talk about the increase of drugs coming across our borders, unchecked because of this new policy of bringing all goods in in an expedited fashion.

Immigration was supposed to benefit from NAFTA. We have not seen that. We have seen increased illegal immigration occurring on our border States, increased problems with immigration, and the conditions really not being lifted, if you will, in Mexico itself.

Labor standards are another problem. I visited Mexico and I witnessed children working in the fields, children working in the packaging plants, the spraying of pesticides that are banned in the United States. Again our labor standards, our child labor laws that we hold dear in this country are being violated in Mexico and the bottom line of all that was supposed to be a benefit for the consumers. Somehow through international trade we were going to bring about some benefits to the consumers, that they would save money. The price of a Mexican tomato and an American grown tomato in Florida is equal at the grocery store. So we have shifted jobs out of the United States, we have given a preferential advantage to the growers in Mexico, they violate what would be considered decent American standards on labor, and ultimately the consumer pays the same amount of money. Then we are having fear of food safety as a result of problems that are being incurred in the system of salmonella and other kinds of problems, the problems in the berries we have recently witnessed, in the strawberries with our school children. Clearly we have a concern.

Mr. Speaker, I can just tell my colleagues as a Member of Congress when we had the big debate on most-favored-nation status for China, the White House, the Trade Office and everyone came over to our office pledging some changes in policy as it related to introduction of citrus to China, a major export for the State of Florida and for the United States, California as well. Prior to the vote I was visited by every official saying, ''We are going to work strenuously on these problems you have raised, Congressman Foley. We want to help solve these problems and we're going to make it our priority to see that these things are fulfilled.''

We have the most-favored-nation status vote, I vote for it hoping that we are going to see a break of the logjam of problems with the most-favored-nation and China will take our citrus to their Nation, we can do some common dialog on business pursuits. Not a word since that vote. No one has called me to suggest we are making some progress now. They do not need my opinion or vote any longer because the vote is already cast.

I can tell my colleagues that the vote is not going to be easy on fast tracking with Latin America. I am not going to take side agreements or snapback provisions. I want it to be in rule of law that we can understand the dynamics by which trade will be negotiated with our Latin American neighbors.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM: A DEMOCRATIC PERSPECTIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, we have heard during some of the 5-minutes a bit earlier about the topic of campaign finance reform. I want to put that on our agenda tonight for a conversation among Members on the Democratic side of the aisle. I want to begin by drawing a contrast. This Congress is spending millions of dollars and months of activity to investigate alleged abuses in the 1996 election. The question that people across this country need to ask is will this Congress not just investigate, but will this Congress legislate, will we start to do something about the problems of our campaign finance system?

I believe those problems are clear and apparent. We know what they are. Those problems are highlighted and I think many of us in this Chamber could come up with a campaign finance reform bill. The problem would be that those bills would differ greatly from one another and in fact they do. We have over 80 campaign finance reform bills in this legislature, in this House right now.

So the question is, how can we come together? How can we reach a conclusion and get to some success? One of the problems in our campaign finance system, one of the problems, is that soft money goes to the national parties in unlimited amounts, it goes from corporations, it goes from unions, and it goes from wealthy individuals. There are no limits to the soft money that can be contributed to the national parties. I will come back in a moment to the bipartisan freshman bill which addresses soft money and a couple of other matters, because I do believe in that freshman bill. I think that it is the major bipartisan effort in this particular Congress.

I want to say at the beginning, this issue is becoming a partisan issue and Democrats are rising up and demanding that we have a vote on campaign finance reform before we go home in the fall. But it does not have to be a partisan issue. In fact, the freshmen showed on a bipartisan basis with six Republican freshman and six Democratic freshmen that we could develop a proposal that would cross party lines and represent significant reform.

Let us step back just for a moment and look at what happened in the last cycle: $240 million in soft money contributions were made to the national parties. The way that money is used now is different from the way it was planned when the law was first introduced. When this law was first introduced, this money, soft money, was to go to party-building activities, the kinds of activities that involve grassroots activities, that encourage the participation of the people across this country. I know that during this last campaign, I had a letter from one of my constituents, he sent me a $20 check, and he said, ''I hope when you get to Washington, you don't forget the people from the grassroots who sent you there.'' A $20 check.

I believe that soft money, $100,000, $500,000, million-dollar contributions diminish the role of every small contributor and every voter. If we look at what is happening to our campaign system in this country, there is too much money in politics, the amount of money is growing too fast, and this institution is becoming more and more affected by money. We have to change that. We cannot do it all at once, but we need to turn back the clock and start to make a difference. I think that is what we are here for tonight. I am happy to talk about some of the proposed solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KIND. Just to pick up on a point the gentleman was making a little earlier, is that not really the crux of the issue, and why we are working so hard in the freshman class at least to enact campaign finance reform? It is about the influence of money in the political

process, the fact that there is too much in it. All of us Members know what is going on around here. The system stinks. It is run amuck. There is too much money in the political process.

Back home in western Wisconsin, the area that I represent, you talk to anyone on the main streets in any of the small towns in western Wisconsin, they all feel the same way, that there is too much money in the political process and it influences what takes place out here, the decision making process, what the agenda is ultimately going to be and the final decisions that are ultimately reached.

The gentleman talks about his contributor back in Maine who sent the $20 check with the proviso to not forget about the average person, the common person. Again, that is really at the heart of this issue right now.

I have been a proud Member of the bipartisan freshman task force these past 8 months working with my distinguished colleague from Maine. It has not been easy. There has been no issue that has been more frustrating, I think, to work on in this session of Congress than try to enact a piece of finance reform which can receive some bipartisan support. I think the legislation that we are reporting out, that we are offering as a proposed change to what is going on right now, is good. It does take care of a lot of the poison pills that both parties wrestle with, which are basically nonstoppers in this debate and is something that we all hope right now since we put in so much work in a bipartisan fashion that we will at least get a hearing from the House leadership, the majority party, willing to schedule this for the debate and for the vote and the ultimate decision on the House floor, so we have a better understanding who here, what Members in this institution, with the proud history and the proud tradition that the U.S. Congress has, where each individual Member stands on the need to get big money out of the political process.

I do not think there is any bigger issue that we should be dealing with in this session of Congress, but I am fearful that time is running out. We have just a very short period of time left in this session, in this year, before we adjourn in the fall. Next year is going to be another political campaign season. Lord knows, it is going to be very difficult to try to enact any type of campaign finance reform at that time, with both parties and individual Members going home to campaign in their respective districts. The year after that, we are already starting to engage in the Presidential race in 2000, so I am not too optimistic that we are going to be able to take this issue on head-on. I think the time is now.

The excuses we are hearing daily, but the people back home do not want to hear the excuses anymore. Sure, we can investigate, sure, we can explore these issues of possible violations in the last campaign. As a former prosecutor myself, we hold people responsible when they do violate the rules and do violate the laws, but there is no excuse to wait and postpone what I view as a very important issue in this fall, in this session. I, along with a lot of the other Members, are calling on the majority leadership to give us our day on the House floor. After all, is that not what democracy is all about?

□ 1845

Mr. ALLEN. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. MILLER of California. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for arranging for this special order where we would have an opportunity to talk about campaign finance reform, since we are precluded from talking about this in the regular order of business because of the reluctance or complete unwillingness of the Republican leadership to schedule this vote.

I want to commend the gentleman from California [Mr. ALLEN] and the gentleman from Wisconsin and your colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, who worked on this bipartisan reform.

I think one of the important highlights of the reform that the gentleman put together was to show that, in fact, it could be done on a bipartisan fashion. Historically, when the Democrats are running the House, we reported out campaign finance reform. It was reported out of the House and sent to the Senate and died. It was reported out of the House at one point and sent to the President and President Bush vetoed the bill. The theory was, as the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. KIND] said, the advantage had to immediately go one place or another.

I think what the freshman task force has shown is, in fact, we can achieve legislation that cleans up this absolutely unacceptable finance system that we have today, and it can be done with agreement between Republicans and Democrats on how that can be done.

At a minimum, that ought to be allowed to be heard in this, the people's House. The notion that we now have is essentially one individual, the Speaker, standing in the way of the people of the United States being given a chance to hear a debate and to resolve some questions about campaign finance reform and about a current system that is corroding and corrupting the principles of democracy.

Mr. KIND is quite correct. This is changing the way we make decisions. It was not by accident that the tax bill that we just passed was late at night, loaded up with a number of provisions that go to benefit people who had made huge soft money contributions, huge soft money contributions, and they were put into a bill that none of us knew about until after the fact.

That is what is happening when people give parties, give individuals hundreds of thousands of dollars, they expect something in return. It is just a simple fact. And that soft money is now becoming inconsistent with our acting in a democratic fashion about the issues that confront this country and confront our constituents.

I have to tell the gentleman that I think that as this issue progresses, as we continue to demand a vote by this House on these issues, that hopefully part of that process will be to give air to the proposal that the gentleman has brought forward to this House, because it does, as the gentleman points out, contain a ban on soft money. I think it is terribly important.

That soft money is overwhelming everything we try to do in our districts. You can go out and run a grass-roots campaign, and go out and shake every hand and knock on every door, go to every rotary and Lions Club, meet with all the business organizations, and what happens, a couple of weeks out from the election, boom, you get hit with a media campaign, and it is about soft money and it is about characterizing your record, and it undoes your relationship with your constituents. It puts mistrust in, it characterizes you in a negative fashion, and you have no ability to fight back.

The old campaigner, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] is here, he was one of the authors of the campaign reform that came out of Watergate. Those limits, that have in fact worked, have been overwhelmed by soft money.

I want to again commend the gentleman for this special order, for all of the time the gentleman has spent in hammering this out, and I want to thank our colleagues on the other side of the aisle that tonight spoke out in favor of the gentleman's legislation and in favor of a ban on soft money. Hopefully, more of them will do that, and we will eventually have a vote to end the influence of soft money in politics.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. ALLEN. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. OBEY. The gentleman has been around for a while, and has been through several periods of reform.

Mr. OBEY. Well, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I simply wanted to take this opportunity to again congratulate the gentleman personally for his leadership in this area, also to congratulate my two Wisconsin colleagues, Mr. KIND and Mr. JOHNSON, and the others who are here and the others who participated in developing this proposal.

I think it is incredibly sad that the original intention of the reforms back in the midseventies have now been so subverted by both misguided Supreme Court decisions and clever lawyering on the part of people who want to influence politics.

The Supreme Court a long time ago passed a one man-one vote decision. One of the reasons that Congress passed campaign finance reform legislation in the seventies was because we wanted to see to it that the one man-one vote philosophy was adhered to,

and that the man who had the money would not, in fact, be able to overwhelm the voice of the man who did not have the money, whether it be a candidate or an average citizen.

That is, I think, going to have to be at the core of any changes that we make. When we passed that bill a long time ago, we thought that what we were doing was passing legislation which would limit to $1,000, period, what any individual could give, whether he was a man of moderate means or a millionaire. And we thought that the most that any organized group would be able to give would be $5,000, and that that would both be on the top of the table, not under the table, fully reported, fully disclosed.

Instead, today we have a system in which one person in my State has been able to contribute more than $1 million to the political operations of the Speaker, and if it were not for the aggressive actions of reporters, no one would ever have known where that money was coming from.

I think we have to have, as in any reform effort, as the core of the effort, the effort of the gentleman and his colleagues to severely limit or eliminate soft money, and I hope we can also add to that other provisions that are necessary so that we end these phony independent expenditures, we end these phony issue advocacy campaigns, that are really efforts to get around the law.

We also, I think, have to educate the public they cannot expect candidates to be financed through immaculate conception. There are too many people that want to see us not accept any private money, but they do not want to support the principles of public financing, either.

I think people need to understand that campaigns are going to cost money and that they have to be financed, they should be financed in the most open possible way, which also makes certain that whether you are giving individually or collectively, that wealthy people cannot have an undue influence in American politics. I congratulate all of you for taking the lead in trying to be part of bringing that about.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY]. As the gentleman well knows, there are a number of bills out there, and a number of different approaches to this particular set of problems, and certainly the freshmen are not saying there is only one answer. In fact, we are even saying that the bill that we have drafted is only a partial step toward more complete campaign finance reform, but it is a step in that direction.

Mr. OBEY. If the gentleman would yield further, I would simply agree with the gentleman from California. If you want exhibit A of why campaign finance reform is needed, it is the tax bill that just passed this place. There would not have been any $50 billion gift to the tobacco industry with the lights out. There would not have been any spectacular giveaway to Amway Corp. You would not have had those items.

So it is not that we are just interested in this for academic reasons. We are interested in this because without it, we cannot make things better in this country for working people.

Mr. ALLEN. I just want to also say that the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], for those who may not know, has been in that chair almost all day today; he has been in this House chamber dealing with the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. The fact that the gentleman would stay here in this chair into the evening to speak out on this issue is something I want to commend the gentleman for and say we admire his leadership, and we know he is going to be back in that chair again tomorrow.

We will try to keep this going with Members from Wisconsin. I would like to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. JOHNSON].

Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the yielding, and I, too, appreciate the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] staying here tonight and adding to our voices, because a veteran voice is needed here with the freshmen voices people are hearing.

We may think we are speaking to an empty House, but we know that across the country people are listening. People have been waiting for this word, and the word is rising up, not just here in Washington but across the country, that campaign finance reform is the order of the day.

People want to hear about it, people want to know about it, and I am especially pleased as a member of the freshman class that we are able to offer something. If it is my understanding, we have at least one promise. We have a promise to be heard in a committee; is that correct?

Mr. ALLEN. That is correct. The gentleman from California [Mr. THOMAS] of the Committee on House Oversight has stated publicly that he will hold a hearing on our bill. We just need to encourage the gentleman to hold it this year, and not in 1998.

I think that this session is drawing toward a close, and that is why we have Democrats here tonight, and Democrats standing up during the day, to say to the folks on the other side and say to the American people that this issue will not go away.

The American people care about this issue. They are not going to let it go and we cannot let it go. We have to do something about it, and we need to do something about it in 1997.

Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin. I thank the gentleman. We do have the promise, and I appreciate that.

The gentleman talked about what happened in Maine, and you have done a lot in campaign finance reform in Maine, California, and Florida. We have heard from their voices tonight, and Wisconsin. We know that people back in the States from different backgrounds are working together, tackling a problem together. It is not unusual.

In Washington, I think a lot of people have the perception that partisan conflict is the preferred order of business. So if you listen to what people think are the established rules that we have to follow in Washington, one of the rules may be that freshmen are not supposed to tackle big issues.

You hear that elected officials are not supposed to get serious about reforming the way that we pay for campaigns. After all, are we not concerned about reelection?

We are. This freshman class I think is different. We are not bound by old Washington ways. When we looked at the current campaign system, when those of us who came through it for the first time had to participate in it, we realized it is badly broken. Together we set out to fix it. We may be new to Congress, but we know that too much money is spent in political campaigns. Everybody knows that.

Real people just feel they are losing their voice in elections. We tonight are talking about a bipartisan approach on behalf of the freshmen, introducing a bill that takes aim at the system's largest problems, but not every problem.

It occurred to us when we first met as a freshman class and we talked about this when we got together in our orientation session, what can we look at, and we introduced then, from months of work, a bill that takes aim at the problems.

It does not touch every new answer of the system. It is not a big bill. It may not include every reform I want, it may not include every reform that the Republican colleagues want, but it is a giant leap toward bringing sanity back to the way we run campaigns.

It is a bipartisan bill, first of all. It would ban the millions of dollars in soft money used to dodge and evade the campaign finance laws on the books that were illustrated earlier in the soft money. If people did not understand, I think the words of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] tonight gave them a clear example.

The bipartisan freshman bill would demand accountability from the faceless outside groups who attempt to influence campaigns, so that when people see the commercials on TV, that they are not quite sure who they are from, but they know who they are about or who they are against, this bill would demand accountability.

□ 1900

It would raise the bar for candidate disclosure so people can identify where exactly a candidate gets his or her support. The reforms that we came through with are agreeable to freshmen in both parties and senior Members. They are responsible, they are workable within the current political climate. That is important.

While I have the opportunity, I want to commend my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who earlier joined in this campaign finance reform

effort. The easiest thing to do, obviously, is to do nothing, to say we are going to do something. But we have a promise, as the gentleman pointed out, that we will get a hearing. We have stepped forward and taken a stand.

Let me finish by saying, I think the time, as has been mentioned before, is now to bring campaigns back to basics and back to people, so that they care again about going to the voting booths. We have a very small window of opportunity to act, and we should act right away. Our freshman bipartisan campaign finance reform is the best way to begin to fix a broken system.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for his remarks.

I yield now to the gentleman from Florida, [Mr. BOYD], one of the distinguished Members of the Freshman Task Force.

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] for giving us the opportunity tonight to join in this colloquy on campaign finance reform.

I want to start by acknowledging some people that got us here. That is, the freshman class presidents: the gentleman from Florida, [Mr. JIM DAVIS], who is our freshman class president on the Democrat side; and the gentleman from Missouri, [Mr. KENNY HULSHOF], on the Republican side. They made a commitment and were instructed by their Members to work on this issue, and appointed the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. TOM ALLEN] on the Democratic side and the gentleman from Arkansas, [Mr. ASA HUTCHINSON] to help the task force to work on this issue. I am proud to be a member of that task force.

I go back home and people say, ''BOYD, why are you working on campaign finance reform? Why is it important to you?'' I say, well, there are two reasons. One is I just came out of a nasty campaign. During that campaign I saw the effects of soft money pouring into congressional campaigns and how it distorted the campaign, at times. So I think that is the first reason.

The second reason is, I believe that the longer we stay in Congress the more calloused we become to the system, the campaign finance system we live under here. We become calloused to the blight that it gives our image, this institution, this institution, the U.S. House of Representatives, the congressional body of the most powerful Nation of the world, which has relatively low marks in terms of public support compared to years past. A lot of it has to do with the tremendous amount of money that is pouring into the campaign system.

Mr. Speaker, as we stay here a long time and we get our committee chairmanships and we get our leadership positions, we learn how to use the system better. We become calloused to the bad effect that it has on our democratic form of government.

So those are the reasons that I feel very strongly that we ought to do something about campaign finance reform. As 1 of 72 new Members of the U.S. House, I was glad to be part of the task force.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bipartisan task force. I heard the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Rules, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON], say earlier this evening, just before we adjourned he was talking about ethics legislation, and he talked about bipartisanship and how important bipartisanship was going to be to advancing reasonable, responsible ethics reform.

The same holds true with campaign finance reform. We cannot come out here and fight with these close numbers and ever accomplish anything. We have to work together. The gentleman from Maine and the gentleman from Arkansas, [Mr. HUTCHINSON], got our groups together, and we looked at all of the issues. The issues we could not agree upon we sort of laid off the table.

We heard from many different kinds of groups during that process. I thought it was a stroke of genius the way the Members set that up. We heard from the Democratic National Committee, the Republican National Committee, the National Broadcasters, the National Right-To-Life, Bi-Pac, the League of Women Voters, environmental groups, labor groups. We heard from all kinds of groups who have a vested interest in this process.

After we heard from those groups, we determined the things that we could agree upon and the things we could not agree upon. We laid off the table and removed from the table those things we could not agree upon, and we have come to the conclusion that the removal of soft money from this system is the one thing that we can do that will best reform the current system that we have.

Is the bill, House Resolution 2183, which is called the Bipartisan Campaign Integrity Act, is it perfect? No, it is not perfect. I would submit that there are very few perfect pieces of legislation that ever come out of this congressional body. But it is a bipartisan proposal that will eliminate soft money and will go a long way towards cleaning up the campaign finance problems that we have in this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to implore the leaders of this body, who I think do a good job overall. We are experiencing some bumpy times here in the last few days, but I think generally the body has been going in a very positive direction in the 6 or 8 months that we have been here as freshmen. I want to implore the leadership to address this issue.

We have been promised, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] and the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] extracted from the Republican leadership a promise to have this House Resolution 2183 heard. I want to implore the leadership to give us a chance to have it heard. If we can make it better and pass it off this floor, let us do it.

I want again to thank the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] and the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] for the work that they have done, and I want to encourage the people back home to call their Member of Congress and encourage them to get involved in this campaign finance reform, and let us get it done.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BOYD] for all his help on that task force. He did a great job. Now we simply have to keep pushing this issue as hard as we can until we get the kind of hearing that I think we all agree we are entitled to.

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

Mr. ALLEN. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MCGOVERN. First of all, I want to commend the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BOYD] for his very eloquent statement, and I want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN], for organizing this special order today, and commend all of my colleagues who have spoken so passionately on behalf of this issue.

There are many different campaign finance reform proposals that have been introduced in this House. Most of them, quite frankly, if they came to a vote on the House floor here, we all could support. Some of them only deal with a portion of a problem, some of them are more comprehensive. But most of them, quite frankly, would improve this broken system that we are now faced with.

But the frustrating thing for all of us here is that we cannot get a vote. We cannot get a day on the House floor where we can debate this issue and where we can vote on it. It is frustrating, because the American people want us to fix this system.

Forgive me if I do not get too excited about the promises that have been made about hearings and about taking action on various bills. We have heard and we have been given promises in the past. We have even seen handshakes on this issue. The fact of the matter is, we have nothing to show for it.

The Speaker of the House has not allowed there to be a vote on campaign finance reform in this House. I think that is very unfortunate. When I go home to Massachusetts, to my district, whether I am speaking before a town hall gathering or a business group or a group of senior citizens, I always get the same question: When are you going to clean up the current campaign finance system? When are the hearings going to end? When are the investigations going to end? When are you going to actually do something and fix the system?

My response is always the same. That is, I would like to do it right now. I would like to do it yesterday. I would like to do it several months ago.

The President has indicated that he would sign a campaign finance reform bill if it was presented to him. But the problem is right here. The problem is

getting the leadership of this House, the Republican leadership of this House, to schedule a vote and to allow us to have that debate, and to allow us to send a bill to the President.

I have no doubt that if we could bring a bill to the floor tomorrow that really reformed this system, it would pass. People who would vote against it, quite frankly, I think would be ridiculed back in their districts. I think that is one of the reasons why we do not see a vote coming up.

I just want to join with my colleagues here in making another plea to the Speaker of the House, as we have done over and over and over again: Give us our day. Allow us to have a vote, up or down, on real campaign finance reform. If he does not want to bring a comprehensive package to the floor, at least let us vote to ban soft money. There are not too many people nowadays who will stand up and defend soft money.

Let us bring that to the floor. Let us ban that. Let us restore some public confidence. Let us eliminate some of the cynicism out there. We could do that very easily. We could do it in a way that would impact the very next elections.

I want to commend my colleague, the gentleman from Maine, for allowing me to participate in this special order, and I hope that the next time we talk about this issue it will be to rejoice in the fact that we have been given a commitment, a date certain, when we can vote on this issue.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MCGOVERN] for all his help on this issue. He certainly makes a good point. We would not have to be here in the evening speaking about this issue if we had a full-fledged debate on the floor of this House during the day. That is what we are asking.

It is real simple. We have only 6 or 7 or 8 weeks left in this session, depending on how we count and how long it takes. I think a lot of us feel that this issue will not go away and we should not go away, we need to deal with it during this year in this House.

Since we will keep it in the family here, I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. TIERNEY].

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for setting up this opportunity to speak on this issue tonight. We are hoping that those who are watching are going to be able to hear a message that we are unable to bring to the floor, because, to be partisan for a minute frankly, the Republican Party that does set the agenda in this House has decided not to have this issue come to the floor.

I listen to everybody talk all day long about bipartisanship. Frankly, I say to the gentleman from Maine, I think he knows my feelings on the matter, I am not a big supporter of bipartisanship, I am an advocate of partisanship, but with a lot of civility, where we clearly establish what our positions are so the public is aware of what the choices are; and in a civil manner we have discourse, we deliberate, we debate, and we vote. And everybody has, hopefully, respect for each other, and that is how we live with the result of that vote and go on.

Unfortunately, I think there has been another path taken by this particular majority, some of whom in the Republican party are clearly with us on the issue of campaign finance reform; they want to debate it and they want to discuss it and vote on it. But the majority over there would not have the ability to bring forward the prospect of having this issue debated and voted upon, and they cannot get those numbers together.

I clearly relate to the gentleman that the Democratic caucus has decided that, as a group, Democrats are in favor of campaign finance reform. We are very desirous of having the matter debated, having the deliberation in front of the public, talking about what might be right or wrong with a particular bill, and then moving forward on that.

I am told over and over again that the public opinion polls do not support it, a public desire for campaign finance reform. I think the gentleman knows as well as I do that, frankly, what it is. If you ask the question, what issues are most on your mind, people may well say, education; they may say health care, other issues which may not get the attention that they deserve, but get some attention at least in this House.

But if you ask the question, what really undermines the credibility of any action taken by Congress, whether it be on health care, whether it be on taxes, whether it be on education, people will say, we do not believe that decisions are made independently. We think large amounts of money go into the people that run our Government, and somehow they have an effect; and it has a sort of corruptive influence, or at least perception, on the work we do down here.

The gentleman and I both know people are down here working very hard and that the system is such that you cannot win a seat here unless you can get your message out, get your visibility up, get people to know who you are and what you stand for.

So I have a challenge for the public. Basically, we all rely on them, so we need not to try to get anybody upset, but I have a challenge for the public. If they want to get rid of the corrupting influence, or perception, of money, then we have to decide how we are going to do that; and I favor comprehensive campaign finance reform.

Frankly, as much as I applaud the gentleman's efforts, and I think they have been wonderful and I think we may end up standing behind the gentleman's effort, because I have told the gentleman over and over again, those who believe we have to move forward on this issue will not stand behind a bill we file or cosponsor as a defense to not voting for anything or having nothing at all passed. We will be open-minded and we will try to move forward in the area of reform.

But I am strictly an advocate of comprehensive campaign finance reform, because I do not believe in unilateral disarmament. I think that is what stops bills from passing here. Incremental bills are always subject to the attack that they leave somebody with more weaponry in the campaign battles than somebody else, whether they take PAC money and somebody feels that working people, environmental groups, and groups like that may have more of an influence, if that is left but soft money is taken away, or whether they attack business PAC's and soft money and feel hard money is left, there is always a feeling in less than comprehensive reform that somebody is left on the short end.

So I put forward the bill, H.R. 2199, that talks about what folks in Maine did. It talks about public financing of campaigns. It talks about the public stepping forward and saying, we are upset about the influence of money, soft money or hard money, that we have to do something about it.

When businesses want to hire people to go down and do their business, they make an investment. They invest a reasonable amount of their money as a business in defining the best people, going out and getting them, interviewing them and hiring them. For less than 1 percent of the smallest estimate of what this Congress produces and what we now call corporate welfare, we could fund congressional elections with public financing with the option of candidates to get public funding.

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Those that still want to go to private funding could go to private funding, but there would be certain carrots and sticks. Publicly funded candidates would have a limit, because the public clearly wants a limit on the amount of money that we spend campaigning. And by virtue of when the money is disbursed, we would have a limit on the length of the campaign, because the public clearly wants an end sometime to the last campaign and some time to govern before the next campaign begins.

The public wants to know that people in office will not be on the phone or at fundraisers day in and day out instead of on the government's business. So once somebody decided to get publicly funded in a campaign, they would get a limited amount and they could raise no other money, hard or soft, because many people have a hard time believing that the person who gives $1,000, $2,000, $3,000, $4,000 is without influence any more than the person who gives $25 or $50 in soft money.

So, frankly, that is the direction that I think we have to move in. We have to have free air time for those people that

adopt public financing to get the message out. The people that want to stay and be private candidates would not have that free air time. But if they overspent the limit of the publicly funded candidate, the publicly funded candidate would get matching funds. That is the disincentive in order to have them not be private candidates. It is the incentive to bring everybody into the one package that gets the public to have credibility for its candidates and office holders. It lets them say we have bought back our Government. We own this enterprise now. We do not have to worry about foreign money influence. We do not have to worry about hard money or soft money or large contributors or small contributors. We do not have to worry about the pervasive attitude that we do not have an open government here that has credibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we push out on comprehensive finance reform. I understand that we may, if anything, get the freshman bill, which is a good bill, and the gentleman understands the compromises that we made there to get something that we hope would pass. But, frankly, if we do not bring pressure on this body, we are not going to get anything at all.

The reason we are here tonight is because somebody has to have a vehicle to get the message to the American people. The Democrats are on record as wanting campaign reform. We have a dozen or so proposals. We would like to debate and deliberate them and get the best final proposal together and bring it to a vote in this body.

But even though there may be some Members on the Republican side that do want to come forward for campaign finance reform, the majority over there do not. The public has to know that is why this issue is not being heard on the floor. That is why it is not being voted on. That is why the public business is not being done in campaign finance reform.

Mr. Speaker, we have to keep this up and I commend the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] for giving us this opportunity and everybody for participating in it at this hour of night, hoping to convince people that this has to be done. We are doing our best to see that it is.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. TIERNEY], and I want to say I appreciate the effort that the gentleman has made on behalf of a public funding bill. I think it is one of the many interesting ideas that are out there and need to have a full debate on this floor.

I have to say I am proud of my home State of Maine for passing a referendum proposal that would encourage public funding, would provide voluntary public funding for the Governor's races, all of the State Senate races, and all of the races for the State House. That will take effect in the year 2000. And I just believe this is one of those ideas we ought to have out here on the floor of the House and have a good solid debate.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would continue to yield, the fact of the matter is that the citizenry of Maine voted in big numbers for that particular concept. In Vermont, the legislature voted for a similar concept. In 12 different States throughout the United States, even conservatively perceived States like Arizona, have voted in overwhelming numbers to show support for this concept.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that while we are down here debating incremental approaches, what is going to happen is that several more States are going to have the people speak up. It is a grassroots effort. There are people out there that are fed up with the current system, and the people down here are going to try to run to the front to get out there and lead.

It is our job. We should not wait for opinion polls. It is our job to perceive what it is that the public needs and to get out front there. I think this bill gives us a chance to do that. I think your bill gives us a chance to start in that direction. I think that Mr. GINGRICH, the Speaker, the others on the other side, are not living up to the responsibility and the promises to the American people and the President to get this issue before us before we go home for recess.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Oregon [Ms. HOOLEY].

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN]. First of all, I thank the gentleman for the leadership that he has shown in this area, Mr. Speaker, as the cochair of the bipartisan task force, the work that he did.

I think it is important for people to know that this committee spent months hearing every group imaginable talk about this issue. What we came up with, and what I am proud to be part of, is a piece of legislation that actually hopefully has a chance to pass. And I guess I am just practical enough that I want something that can pass.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, I would love to see comprehensive campaign finance reform. I wish we could make it happen; it is probably not. So how do we do it incrementally? And I think this piece of legislation that the freshmen introduced is a way to go.

Mr. Speaker, when I got here people asked me, what is it like and who are the people that you serve with? I talk about my fellow Members of Congress and I talk about the fact that people are here, they have integrity, they work hard, they care about their districts, they really work hard to care about their districts. Yet, I find that three-quarters, according to a poll, and I know we are not supposed to listen to a poll, but when you hear a poll that talks about three-quarters of Americans believe that public officials make or change policy decisions as a result of money that they receive from major contributors, that perception tells me that this campaign system is morally bankrupt and that if we want to get back the confidence of the American public, we absolutely have to do something about campaign finance reform.

Mr. Speaker, soft money came about. It was never intended to happen, and that is where so many of the large donors give large chunks of money. And I do not think they want to do it any more either. But it is a system that literally has exploded. Both parties collected twice as much as they did 2 years ago. What is it going to be like in the next year? What is it going to be like 3 years from now?

We absolutely have to do something about soft money. There is no control over it. So banning soft money, which this bill does, I think is again a step in the right direction.

There were a lot of ads on TV and most people have no idea where they came from. If it was our ad, we had to put our name on it and usually a little picture so that people knew who was putting that ad out. But we saw other ads on television for issues, advocacy issues, that said who it was sponsored by.

But then there were ads, and it does not matter whether it was for or against us, there were ads that came from committees like the Good Government Committee. Mr. Speaker, tell me, who is the Good Government Committee? It could be anyone. The name is made up.

Mr. Speaker, we have several donors. There is no disclosure on those independent campaigns of who those donors are. People say, well, what difference does it make if we know? I think it is important. People make decisions based on who financed; what do they really care about; what is the message they are really trying to get across; who donated the money to those independent expenditure campaigns?

Again, Mr. Speaker, these ads are going to happen and it does not matter whether they are for or against us as Members of Congress, the fact is we need disclosure. We need to know who funds those campaigns.

What this bill does very simply is it just says, if candidates are going to fund independent expenditures, they have the right to do that under the Constitution. They can do that. But if they are going to do it, then they must, they must tell who funds those campaigns. So it is a little disclosure piece.

Mr. Speaker, the third part that I really like, campaign disclosure for candidates, how much is spent, where candidates get the money. We are back in the dark ages. It is the days of writing it out with a scroll and the pen and ink.

Mr. Speaker, we now have computers. We have fax machines. We can or should be able to get the information to the Federal Elections Commission much quicker than what currently happens. Again, people have a right to

know where candidates are getting their money and how they are spending it. So, I would like to see us get into this next century and do it in a way that makes sense for people.

Again, this is not comprehensive campaign finance reform, which I would like to see happen, but it is an incremental step that has bipartisan support.

I guess the problem I have as a new Member is when an issue like this is important, and it is important to the public's confidence in this institution, and I am very proud, as a new Member, very proud to be part of this institution. But when people lack faith in us, it is really an incentive for them to not vote and not be part of a system. This is a system of self-government and we want people to be involved in this process. It is critical to our democracy that we have people involved in this process.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to at least ban the soft money; at least have the disclosure of independent expenditures; and those of us that are candidates, let us make sure that people also know where we get our money and how we spend it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] for all of the work. I guess I have a problem with not having this up for debate and a vote. I do not think there is any issue that is not worthy, or at least I cannot think of any right at the moment, that is not worthy of debate and a vote. This is a critical issue to our democracy and all we are asking for is that it be allowed to the floor before we go home for the winter recess and that we have a chance to vote on it. Up or down; any one of those bills. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his hard work.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Oregon as the current president of our freshman class. The gentlewoman has plunged into this issue and is helping to build support for it in these halls, and I appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman makes an excellent point. One of the points she makes is that essentially we are going to be embarrassed if we have all of these investigations and we do not get to legislate. That is what we are here for.

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, that is why I came.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to yield to the gentlewoman from New York [Ms. MALONEY], who is another leader in this particular area. I hope the gentlewoman will talk about her bill tonight.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman organizing this hour tonight for us to express our support for campaign finance reform, and I congratulate the freshman class for their work in their task force.

As my colleagues know, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] announced today that his committee will move forward with hearings next week. The gentleman has replaced his lawyers. He has got roughly a $15 million budget to go forward. There have been 46 depositions. Yet not one penny has been spent, not one hearing has been held, and not one witness has been called in an effort to figure out how to solve the problem.

Mr. Speaker, the closest this Congress came to making any real move on this issue was in March, when the Senate voted down a resolution which proposed a constitutional amendment to allow mandatory campaign spending limits. Yesterday, the President repeated his request for a resolution on campaign finance reform. He has pledged that he would sign one into law.

There are 85 different pieces of legislation floating around Capitol Hill now trying to address the problem of campaign finance reform, and there is a virtual graveyard of proposals that have died in former Congresses. Yet none of these 85 proposals have had a hearing or have been given serious review or consideration by a committee in this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, if we take a look at this list, of course, there is the bipartisan Freshman Task Force proposal which would ban soft money. There is the bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 1997, which would award postal and broadcast discounts to those who voluntarily limit spending. There is the American Political Reform Act, which bases spending limits on how much a candidate's opponent spends. And really there is my personal favorite which would ban soft money and combine it with the Independent Commission on Campaign Finance Reform of 1997.

Mr. Speaker, of course this is my bill, which is a bipartisan effort, along with the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN], the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. FRANKS] and the gentleman from Washington [Mr. WHITE].

Mr. Speaker, this bill would establish a commission that would come up with a plan for reform. The plan would have to come up this Congress for a vote in this session.

Our proposal is based very strongly on the successful Base Closing Commission, which passed in a former Congress. We all agreed that we had to close the bases but we could not agree which ones had to be closed, so we had a commission. It came forward with a plan and we moved forward and closed the bases.

We have a similar problem before Congress now. Everyone says they are for campaign finance reform, yet they cannot seem to agree on a proposal or get one to the floor for the vote.

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Our commission would require a vote in this Congress on campaign finance reform.

The legislation, the 85 proposals that are before us, are very varied. Some are good. Some I agree with. But there is one point that all of them have in common: They do not have a chance to become law because not a single one of them has been permitted to come to the floor for a vote.

We have not even been permitted to examine any of these proposals in a formal hearing. Meanwhile, many of us who serve on that committee, the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, will have to sit for hours, possibly days, possibly months, at hearings in this committee which will do nothing more than point fingers at people who have already been accused and little to correct the problem.

As you have pointed out, and many of your colleagues in the freshman class, we need to be putting more of our efforts in trying to solve the problem.

In 1996, the House and the Senate, the candidates for the House and the Senate spent more than $765 million to get elected. That is $765 million. This is up 72 percent from 1990. The Speaker of the House has been quoted as saying that there is not enough money in the campaign system. Well, Mr. Speaker, how much more money would we have to spend?

This election system is one that turns elections into auctions. We need to show the American people that our Government is not for sale, that our elections are not for sale to the highest spender. We need to move forward with meaningful campaign finance reform. It is very simple to do the math, $765 million on elections.

This adds up to one strong point: We need campaign finance reform. We need to bring a bill to the floor of this House for a vote before we ask our constituents to go to the polls and vote for us.

I congratulate the gentleman and the freshmen class for all the hard work that they have done on this issue.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York.

You have been a real leader in this field. You have one of the major proposals that ought to be debated here. This whole question of an independent commission, I think, is one that we need to look at very, very carefully. You have generated support on both sides of the aisle for your proposal. It is time, as we have said, it is time to get down to business and hold this kind of debate during the day, not during the evening.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, that is true. We have roughly 100 cosponsors on our bipartisan effort, and certainly 100 cosponsors shows a depth of support in this body and one that certainly should merit a hearing and a vote on this floor.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. SNYDER].

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and I thank the Speaker and the staff this evening that are letting us talk about campaign finance reform.

I noticed we had the gentlewoman from Oregon [Ms. HOOLEY], the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN], the

whole country is interested in campaign finance reform. I am from Arkansas. I know that the influence of money in politics concerns Arkansas.

We also had a referendum in our State that was passed overwhelmingly by the people to deal with State elections. Some of the polls say people do not have that really high at the top of their lists. They have jobs and the economy and education. Well, of course, they do have those at the top of their lists. But if you ask them, is this an important issue, absolutely, it is an important issue.

I know in Arkansas people are very interested in how I think about elections, how I think they ought to be elected. They are interested in us improving our democracy. When we are talking about campaign finance reform, we sometimes get lost in all the details. We are talking about improving our democracy, the greatest democracy in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman. I know he has worked very hard in a bipartisan manner with the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON]. You and he have done great work together. The gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON] is a Republican and the gentleman from Maine [Mr. ALLEN] is a Democrat. I commend you for your work, and I look forward to working with you in the next few weeks. Hopefully, we can bring one of these bills to the floor before we recess.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I appreciate all his support in this area.

I would simply say, in conclusion tonight, that I thank all of the Members who have been here to discuss this issue. This issue will not go away. This may not affect people in the way that paying for an education affects them. It may not affect them in the way that losing a job or finding a new job may affect them. It is not their Social Security payment or their tax bill. But they care about this issue. I hear about it all the time. I know the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. SNYDER] and others do.

The fundamental problem is, we have to be able to take the issues that are of concern to people across this country and not just talk about them in the evening but vote on them during the day. That is what we are asking.

MORE ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM AND EDUCATION

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address the House tonight and look forward to a good dialog with my friend, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SCARBOROUGH].

First of all, I want to say that I certainly think that it is a good time to talk about campaign finance reform and all the things that have been going on, particularly with the shenanigans at the White House, the renting of the Lincoln bedroom, the raising money on taxpayer premises, the fundraising at Buddhist temples and so forth. I think we should talk about PAC contributions and what we should do about it. Should we limit it?

I think candidates should be forced to raise 75 percent of the money that they spend on their campaign in their own district, rather than having money sent to them from Washington special interests. Let us raise it in hometown America, make as many of those contributions individual.

I am not sure if we should outlaw PAC's, but I do think it is proper to say maybe 25 to 35, maybe 40 percent of the money should be the maximum limit for PAC contributions in the aggregate, but beyond that you should have money raised individually. You need to have public disclosure in all of that.

But, Mr. Speaker, one thing we have got to do is enforce existing laws. It is a little ridiculous to blame all the problems on campaign finance reform on the need for a new law when we have laws on the books right now that would apply to a number of the situations that are going on.

There was a great article in The Washington Times on September 2, written by Mark Levin on the subject. He says any time a politician wants to get a good response from an audience, all he or she has to do is say, we need campaign finance reform. Everybody claps. Then somebody else stands up and says, we need to protect the first amendment, freedom of speech. Then the group claps again.

So you have this kind of a very win-win dialog when you go back home and so forth. But let us talk about some of the laws that are already on the books.

The 2 U.S.C. 441(e) prohibits foreign nationals from directly or through others contributing to any political campaign or soliciting acceptance or receiving such contributions; in other words, no foreign money.

Clearly, then, foreigners may not attempt to influence an American election by giving money to such groups as the Democratic National Committee or to the Republican National Committee. But it seems to be the Democratic National Committee that had the biggest problem with this on the last goaround, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure of the number, but I believe it was something like $3 million in foreign contributions. Again, U.S.C. 441 clearly prohibits that.

Then there is section 18 U.S.C. 1956, which prohibits the solicitation or acceptance of laundered campaign contributions intended to conceal the nature, source, ownership, or control of the funds. This would apply if you were going to, let us say, go to a Buddhist temple and have a huge fundraiser from dirt poor Buddhist nuns who have taken an oath of poverty. Where do they suddenly come up with $140,000?

If it is the case that they were used simply as a fence, if they were laundering the money, then here we have this law, 18 U.S.C. 1956 that prohibits it. It is on the books now, Mr. Speaker. We do not need new legislation.

Then there is 18 U.S.C. 600, which prohibits promises of contracts or other benefits as consideration, favor, or reward for any political activity. Among other things, this would prohibit, for example, the Department of Commerce from selling trade missions in exchange for political donations. And as we know, there seems to be some suggestion that the Department of Commerce rewarded heavy contributors to the administration with trade trips and so forth like that.

Along with U.S.C. 600, there is 18 U.S.C. 601, which prohibits the withholding of a benefit or program of the United States from any person who refuses to make a campaign contribution. In other words, you cannot withhold something because somebody supports your opponent. I think that is very important and something that all of us in Congress need to be aware of.

A couple of other things: 18 U.S.C. 595 prohibits employees of the Government from using their office in any way to affect Federal elections. This law seems to have a problem with it for politically appointed employees who seem to be using taxpayer premises for a campaign purpose. And we have learned a lot about that recently.

Then there is 18 U.S.C. 607, which prohibits the solicitation of campaign funds on Government property. Records show that in the administration a number of people violated this law over and over again. Not only did they make dozens of calls for cash from such places as the White House or auctioning coffees at the White House or selling the Lincoln bedroom, but it seems to be there was certainly a pattern of covering up from it, which is interesting because 18 U.S.C. 2 prohibits anyone from helping or furthering a criminal act.

Eighteen U.S.C. 371 prohibits two or more persons from conspiring to commit a crime; 18 U.S.C. 1001 prohibits anyone from making false statements to Federal investigators; 18 U.S.C. 1621 prohibits lying under oath which is, of course, perjury; 18 U.S.C. 1623 prohibits lying to a grand jury.

These are criminal statutes unaffected by campaign finance reform, Mr. Speaker. These are already on the books. All the folks who seem to be crying about the need for campaign finance reform are strangely silent on the laws that are on the books right now that are not being enforced.

While I think that we need to look at our campaign finance laws, see if we can improve them, I think it is very important to do it on a bipartisan basis. I also think, Mr. Speaker, we should be able to investigate folks who have broken Federal law on a bipartisan basis. There is nothing Democrat