

speech by independent groups that advocates the election or defeat of an identifiable candidate.

But the political class will not stop there. Consider mere issue advocacy—say, a television commercial endorsing abortion rights, mentioning no candidate and not mentioning voting, but broadcast in the context of a campaign in which two candidates differ about abortion rights. Such communications can influence the thinking of voters. Can't have that, other than on a short leash held by the government's speech police. So restriction of hard money begets restriction of soft, which begets restriction of express advocacy, which begets regulation of issue advocacy—effectively, of all civic discourse.

The political class is not sliding reluctantly down a slippery slope, it is eagerly skiing down it, extending its regulation of political speech in order to make its life less stressful and more secure. Thus is the First Amendment nibbled away, like an artichoke devoured leaf by leaf.

This is an example of what has been called "the Latin Americanization" of American law—the proliferation of increasingly rococo laws in attempts to enforce fundamentally flawed laws. Reformers produce such laws from the bleak, paternalistic premise that unfettered participation in politics by means of financial support of political speech is a "problem" that must be "solved."

One reason the media are complacent about such restrictions on (others') political speech is that restrictions enhance the power of the media as the filters of political speech, and as unregulated participants in a shrunken national conversation. Has the newspaper in which this column is appearing ever editorialized to the effect that restrictions on political money—restrictions on the ability to buy broadcast time and print space and other things the Supreme Court calls "the indispensable conditions for meaningful communication"—do not restrict speech? If this newspaper ever does, ask the editors if they would accept revising the First Amendment to read:

"Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of the press, but Congress can restrict the amount a newspaper may spend on editorial writers, reporters and newsprint."

As Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Kentucky Republican, and others filibuster to block enlargement of the federal speech-rationing machinery, theirs is arguably the most important filibuster in American history. Its importance will be—attested by the obloquies they will receive from the herd of independent minds eager to empower the political class to extend controls over speech about itself.

Mr. HATCH. Let me just quote a couple of other paragraphs because I think this article really sums it up. I do not know how anybody could disagree with this article. I am skipping over quite a bit of it which I think is worthy of consideration by anybody, but let me just read a couple more paragraphs:

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What a comment, terrific comment. And it sums it up pretty well:

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What an article. He sums it up better than anybody I know. Frankly, I commend this article to anybody who cares about free speech rights, that this bill, as modified, would eviscerate.

I don't quite agree with George Will, that this may be the most important constitutional filibuster in history, but it is certainly one of the most important. I know of others that have been, I think, equal in importance, not the least of which is the debate we had on the resignation of the President a few years ago.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, September 26, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,387,382,191,644.62. (Five trillion, three hundred eighty-seven billion, three hundred eighty-two million, one hundred ninety-one thousand, six hundred forty-four dollars and sixty-two cents)

One year ago, September 26, 1996, the federal debt stood at \$5,198,325,000,000 (Five trillion, one hundred ninety-eight billion, three hundred twenty-five million)

Twenty-five years ago, September 26, 1972, the federal debt stood at \$437,507,000,000 (Four hundred thirty-seven billion, five hundred seven million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,949,875,191,644.62 (Four trillion, nine hundred forty-nine billion, eight hundred seventy-five mil-

lion, one hundred ninety-one thousand, six hundred forty-four dollars and sixty-two cents) during the past 25 years.

#### WHY A PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHER PLAN FOR D.C. SCHOOLS IS A BAD IDEA

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, tomorrow morning the Senate will vote on the creation of the first federally funded private school voucher program in the Nation.

It is no accident that this new voucher program is being debated on the D.C. appropriations bill. None of us has a constituency in the District of Columbia. We can do anything to the District, and we are unaccountable to its voters for our actions. And in recent years, Congress has done quite a bit to the District of Columbia.

Two years ago, in recognition of poor city management and extreme budgetary problems, Congress created a financial control board to help get the city back on its fiscal feet. Not quite a year ago, the control board announced the formation of an emergency management team for the city's schools. The elected school board was relieved of its authority. The superintendent was urged to resign, and a new team was established, which is headed by retired Gen. Julius Becton.

General Becton signed on for a 3-year tour of duty in D.C. schools, yet before even a full year has passed, Congress is poised to pull the rug out from under him by creating a private school voucher plan.

Supporters of private school vouchers prefer to call them school choice. But parents don't choose the schools their children will attend. Private schools select the children they will accept. This is not a luxury our public schools enjoy. Public schools are committed to providing an education to all children: To children who come to school at any time of the year, to children with disabilities, to children whose primary language is not English, to children with disciplinary problems, and to children with low IQ's.

Private schools have the ability to select the smartest, the least difficult students with the fewest challenges to overcome. Supporters of the voucher plan point out that there are a number of inner-city, parochial schools that take whatever child comes to the door. There is no doubt that parochial schools have an important role to play and are doing a good job, but that does not mean that they should receive Federal funding. It does not mean that they have taken on all of the obligations of our public schools.

I believe that it is wrong to provide Federal dollars to private or parochial schools to enable them to skim the best students from the public schools. Vouchers also would skim the students whose parents are involved in their child's education, leaving the public schools with the greatest challenges.