

metropolitan centers and provides no assurance that funds will be available to provide training and equipment for emergency responders.

Moreover, the bill makes a mockery of our Nation's environmental protection laws. It ignores the National Environmental Protection Act and would take precedence over nearly every local, State or Federal environmental statute or ordinance, including, among others, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and many more. It establishes radiation protection standards far lower than in any other Federal program and in complete contradiction to internationally accepted thresholds.

The bill provides little or no public input or comment by affected communities or individuals and establishes a whole new set of unreachable deadlines, repeating the very mistakes Congress made in 1982 with the original Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

All of this—the trampling of our environmental laws, the billions of dollars in subsidy to the nuclear power industry, and the grave threat to the health and safety of millions of Americans—is completely unnecessary. Nuclear utilities can and do store waste safely on site at reactors. In fact, the very same storage technology that the legislation contemplates using at the Nevada test site is currently used at reactor sites around the country, with many more sites soon to follow. No reactor in the United States has ever closed for lack of storage.

Despite the scare tactics of the nuclear power industry, there is no storage crisis. Objective scientific experts agree that there is no storage crisis. The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, an independent oversight board created by the Congress, found in March of 1996, and repeated again this year, that there is no compelling technical or safety reason to move spent fuel to a centralized interim facility for the next few years. Nevertheless, the nuclear power industry has been relentless in its efforts to move its waste to Nevada as soon as humanly possible, no matter what the consequences.

Mr. President, we will continue to do whatever we can to stop this legislation from passing. With a firm veto threat in place and without the votes to override the veto, I encourage the leadership of both the Senate and the House of Representatives to stop this exercise in futility. Stop wasting Congress' time on ill-founded legislation that stands little or no chance of being enacted.

The American people deserve more from us than wasting our time on billion-dollar subsidies for an industry that has spent too long already at the public trough.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BUMPERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. BUMPERS. Mr. President, I came over to speak on a beautiful, lazy Friday afternoon—that is one of the times you can get the floor without having to sit around too long—and talk about three or four items that I have just been reflecting on—nothing heavy.

But to take up campaign finance reform first, that issue has had the Senate tied in knots, now, for about 6 weeks, so tied in knots that we are not going to be able to finish the work that we ought to finish, particularly on the highway transportation bill, and that is a real tragedy. Nevertheless, I have felt very strongly about this issue for a long time, so strongly that earlier this year I introduced my own bill to provide for public financing of campaigns.

I think I could probably say without fear of contradiction—and at my age I am not likely to live long enough to see this country go to public financing—and yet in my opinion that is the only solution: If you take all private money out of financing of campaigns in this country then you know that any private money in a campaign is a violation.

Senator THOMPSON has just announced—essentially announced—the shutting down of the hearings on campaign finance reform. Nobody's fault—I thought Senator THOMPSON did a credible job. I thought all the members of the committee did. But there really was not very much there, except occasional abuses, cases of neglect, inattention, and heavy partisanship, but very little in a way that could remotely be construed as illegal. Yet, for all the abuses—and there were some—uncovered and testified to and about during those hearings, there is not any strong sentiment here to change the system under which those abuses occurred. If we do nothing this year, we do nothing next year, you can rest assured the abuses will continue.

I come from the Democratic Party. Of course, when it comes to raising money, we are a threatened species. But completely aside from the politics of the issue—and the fact is that the Republicans outraise us—I think our Democratic National Committee is in debt by \$15 million. I saw a big story in the paper this morning that the Democratic National Committee was going to raise \$2.5 million at a retreat in Florida this weekend, and the story acted as though there was something ominous and maybe certainly unethical about it. But it didn't seem that way to me at all, not under the existing system. There is nothing wrong with people giving \$50,000 a couple to attend a weekend retreat. That is a pretty steep price, but people do it every weekend in both parties. The price is just not normally that high.

But I also feel that as long as we allow that sort of thing to continue, we are effectively selling off the Government to the highest bidder. I said on the floor, and it bears repeating, you cannot expect a democracy to function as it is supposed to function when money plays the role it plays in our campaigns. So, I hope that, come next March or whenever they have agreed to, if there has been such an agreement, that we can address the McCain-Feingold bill. I am a cosponsor of the bill, but I must say it pales compared to what I think ought to be done, namely go to public financing and take private money out of it.

I saw a list in the Washington Post yesterday of all the incumbents and how much money they had in the bank and how much the challengers had. And the incumbents are all friends of mine. This is not to belittle them. They are simply taking advantage of the system as it is. But the incumbents have millions in the bank and the challengers had virtually nothing. As a country lawyer from a town of 1,200 people who jumped up from a private practice to run for Governor—which most people considered insane, trying to get me to submit to a saliva test—believe you me, I know the power of incumbency and I faced it.

In the first primary, I spent \$90,000. You couldn't get on the evening news for a week for that today.

I don't want to get too preachy about it. This is something you can get preachy about. But the fact is, I see campaign finance reform now in a different way than I saw it even as recently as 2 or 3 years ago. I see it now as a real threat to this Nation. It is no longer, at least it should not be, a partisan matter. It is, and it shouldn't be, because everybody's future is at stake.

I saw in the paper this morning where one of the candidates in Virginia is going to be given \$1 million by his party. I saw last week where one of the candidates for SUSAN MOLINARI's spot, I guess it is in New York, that one of the parties is dumping \$800,000 into that campaign and that person's opponent had \$35,000 in the bank. You don't have to be brilliant to know how those races are going to come out. Television does it all and you cannot get on television without money. That is what these massive contributions are all about.

Whoever has the most money 94 percent of the time wins. You can hardly call that a democracy because, as I say, it is threatening.

REDUCING THE DEFICIT

Mr. BUMPERS. Mr. President, there is a lot of talk now since the President has announced that the deficit this year for 1997 is, I believe, \$22.6 billion. That is an incredible figure. In 1993, you are looking at a Senator who was genuinely concerned, really concerned, not just concerned, alarmed about where we were heading with these massive deficits of \$290 billion a year, and