Rollcall—68, aye; 69, nay; 70, aye; 71, aye; 72, aye; 73, nay; 74, nay; 75, nay; 76, nay; 77, yea; 78, nay; 79, aye; 80, nay.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM—AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME PROGRESS

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 30, 1998

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, last October, a group of 30 Republican members asked Speaker GINGRICH to set open ground rules for the House debate on the issue of campaign finance reform. He promised to bring up these issues in March and he has done so.

I and other co-signers hoped that we could build a bipartisan consensus to bridge the disagreements on campaign finance that divide the parties. As one who has been involved in this issue for many years, I had few illusions about the difficulties of this effort. But I believed that the House had developed a bipartisan group committed to genuine reform and that this group could become the nucleus for a broad agreement.

The bipartisan Shays-Meehan group, the Tuesday Group Republicans, the Blue Dog Democrats, and the bipartisan freshman group of 1996 had demonstrated the possibilities on a limited scale. By joining forces, I hoped we could be the engine of bipartisan campaign reform in the House.

Beginning last October, members of these groups and their staffs worked many long hours in an intense effort to produce the broad, bipartisan consensus all of us wanted. Unfortunately, despite the best of intentions and the good-faith efforts of all involved, we simply could not come to a final agreement.

We diverged on a number of issues, including the extent of a ban on so-called ''soft money'' which seems unlimited and is largely unregulated contributions that both parties collect from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals outside the scope of our present Federal election laws. Some of us were committed to a full and complete soft-money ban at the Federal, State and local levels. Others preferred the more limited approach in the freshman bill that bans soft-money at the national party level and prohibits Federal officeholders, candidates, and their agents from any involvement in raising, soliciting, directing, or transferring such funds. But it would not ban soft money at the State level.

This disagreement was fundamental—it reflects strongly held principles on both sides and it is an honest difference of opinion.

The members of the bipartisan working group also could not resolve disagreements over so-called ''issue ads''—the television and radio advertisements that flood the airwaves at the end of a campaign launching anonymous attacks on candidates without being required to disclose the source of their funding.

A number of us wanted all special interest issue ads to comply with the same Federal election disclosure laws that bind us as candidates. That would include limits on contributions from individuals and political action committees and full disclosure and complete reporting of all contributions and expenditures. Others believed that imposing those restrictions on non-candidates would violate First Amendment freedoms and that, at most, we should require disclosure.

Again, Mr. Speaker, these are not phony arguments. These are real differences of opinion on complex issues.

There were other less severe disagreements, but in hindsight we failed to give adequate consideration to what is probably the most serious roadblock to any broad bipartisan consensus on campaign finance. That roadblock is the role of union money in our campaigns.

From the start of the bipartisan discussions, Democratic members were very clear that they were united in opposition to certain Republican proposals, such as the ''Paycheck Protection Act'' that would require unions to obtain permission from individual union members before their dues could be used for political activities. This proposal was viewed as a pure ''poison pill'' intended to kill reform and therefore not subject to compromise.

At the same time, a majority of House Republicans—162 of 225 are cosponsors of the paycheck bill—view this legislation in the exact opposite light. That is, many Republicans believe that failure to include Paycheck Protection is a poison pill for reform because a soft-money ban would cut off Republican funds for grassroots activities such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts while leaving largely pro-Democratic unions free to spend their own money on such efforts for the Democrats.

In short, Mr. Speaker, there are stark and fundamental disagreements between the two parties on this issue and the efforts to resolve those conflicts have not succeeded despite the very intense effort that was made over the past 5 months.

The failure of the bipartisan working group means we are largely back where we began—splintered on two or three plans that are nominally bipartisan. While I believe that each of these proposals has merit, the reality is that each also lacks the depth of support and the staying power necessary to win passage in the House and the other body, to survive a difficult conference, and to be signed into law.

Barring the development of a genuine bipartisan consensus, I see little reason to hope that we can pass a significant campaign reform bill this year. While some argue that a majority of the House supports the McCain-Feingold II proposal, I question the wisdom of trying to force the passage of a bill that already has been killed in the Senate and that does not enjoy broad bipartisan support here.

If we are every to achieve real reform, it must be done on a fair, bipartisan basis and the unfortunate truth is that that basis does not now exist. As one who has spent a great deal of time on the McCain-Feingold proposal, a Commission bill and major disclosure legislation, and a lot of energy in seeking a bipartisan consensus, I am disappointed but I am not willing to give up. Neither am I willing to waste time trying to assign blame or score partisan points on this issue.

Republicans and Democrats must share equally in the failure to achieve consensus on this issue and both must be prepared to make important compromises if we are every to move forward. That means we must craft legislation with real reforms that affect both parties and every special interest group.

The bill offered by Rep. BILL THOMAS, chairman of the Committee on House Oversight is a serious effort. He accepted a number of our ideas. He worked avidly to build a consensus. He sought to strike a balanced and fair framework for campaign finance reforms. The legislation is not perfect. No bill is. Among other reforms, this bill would:

Ban soft money contributions and spending by the national party committees and prohibit federal officeholders, candidates and their agents from being involved in soft money activities.

Require full public disclosure of the sources of the special interest funding for issue ads that identify a candidate for federal office in the last 90 days of a campaign. Voters have a right to know who is trying to influence an election.

Provide basic tools for state and local officials to combat voter fraud so that the votes of U.S. citizens are not canceled out by illegal votes.

Require that unions and corporations give their members or stockholders the power to block the use of their dues or funds for political activities. Frankly, I believe some of the language in this section is too broad and needs refinement but the goal of balanced limits on unions and corporations is sound and necessary.

These are real reforms. This bill would produce genuine, substantive and far-reaching changes in the way our campaigns are conducted. I support it and I urge my colleagues to do the same. If it passes, real progress will have been made.

IN CELEBRATION OF EDWARD RYBKA'S 70TH BIRTHDAY

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 30, 1998

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a leader in the Polish-American community in Cleveland, Ohio, Edward Rybka, who will celebrate his 70th birthday on April 14, 1998.

Edward has worked for years to promote understanding between the Catholics and the Jewish in Cleveland. His dedication has earned him the Good Joe award from the Cleveland Society of Poles as well as the Brotherhood Award from Fairmount Temple. Edward is also owner and President of a prosperous real estate agency, Rybka Realty.

Edward will celebrate his birthday with a family reunion in Florida with his wife, Irene, son, Robert, daughter Michelle, and his two grandchildren. My fellow colleagues, please join me in wishing a happy birthday to Edward Rybka, a great community leader and family man.

DR. NAPOLEON B. ''PAPA BEAR'' LEWIS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 30, 1998

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness that I stand to offer my condolences to the family of