

I heard an extended debate last week between Senator MCCAIN, who has shown great and courageous leadership on this issue, and another Senator. Basically the interchange was, point out to us what Senators have been corrupted. A large part of the debate had to do with questions and answers about which Senators had been corrupted.

I have been in the Senate for about 9 months.

The men and women I serve with here are far from corrupt. They are hard-working people who do what they think is right and, even when we disagree, I have enormous respect for my colleagues in this body. That respect has done nothing but grow during the time I have been here.

The problem with the debate, though, is it is not about what Senators are corrupt. That focus is wrong. That is about us. This debate is not about us. This debate is about the folks who have quit voting. It is about parents who don't want their kids involved in politics, who don't want their kids involved in Government. They have this feeling in their stomach that there is something wrong. They could not articulate to you with great specificity what is wrong, but they know something is wrong. There is no place I would put greater confidence than in the gut understanding of the American people. It is the reason they are not voting anymore and not participating.

The single biggest loophole that we have today is soft money. I strongly support comprehensive, across-the-board campaign finance reform, to return power to regular people. But the reality is that what we have a chance of passing in this Congress is a ban on soft money. That doesn't solve the problem, there is no question about that; we will continue to have other

problems in other areas. But if we keep putting this off, not addressing the issue and voting it down on a procedural basis, even though a majority of the Senators voted in favor of campaign finance reform, we have not sent the right signal to the American people. We have a responsibility—I believe I have a personal responsibility to the people that I represent all over North Carolina—to say that we are going to do what we can do. We are going to send you a powerful signal that we are starting the process of solving this huge problem.

The simplest way to send that signal is to ban soft money—to ban it tomorrow. Let's put a stop to this unregulated flow of huge sums of money that are coming into our political system. This ban alone won't solve the problems facing our political system. Nobody believes it will. But it will send a powerful message across this country that we care, that the people in this Senate care about how average Americans feel about the process. Because if we don't ban soft money, we send the signal that we don't care, that all we care about is ourselves, our own elections, and we don't care about the people out there across this country who are no longer going to the polls. We have to do something about that. They need to hear a loud and powerful message from us.

We can address the other issues as we go forward. But, first, we have to make it clear to the people of America that we are willing to do something and that we are focused on them, their concerns, and their worries and not just ourselves and our elections. That is what we need to do, Mr. President.

The bottom line is, we ultimately have to return power in this Government to where it started, which is with

regular people going to the polls. We have to return democracy to its roots, because that is how this country began. Over the course of the last 200 years—particularly over the course of the last 10 years—that has changed. Folks back home know in their hearts and souls, without seeing it, that these powerful people who write big checks, the big special interests, are having an enormous influence over what happens up here. It bothers them. You know, it ought to bother them, because they are right. We have to say something back to these people who are worried, who aren't voting anymore and don't want their kids involved in Government and politics. I, myself, in my last campaign, made a decision not to accept contributions from PACs and Washington lobbyists, which is nothing but a small step along this road. But we as a body have to send a message, and that message should be loud, clear, and unequivocal. The message is that we are returning power in your democracy to you.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:25 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, October 20, 1999, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate October 19, 1999:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DONNA A. BUCELLA, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS VICE CHARLES R. WILSON, RESIGNED.