or the CEO decides to spend several million dollars defeating a candidate, should the people who own the company, the shareholders, at least know that and be in on the decision?

The DISCLOSE Act would help with all these goals. It would make CEOs and other leaders take personal responsibility for their ads. It would require companies and groups to disclose to the FEC within 24 hours of conducting any campaign-related activity or transferring money to other campaign groups. It would prevent foreign companies from contributing to the outcome of our election. It would mandate that corporations, unions, and other groups disclose their campaign activities to shareholders and members in their annual and periodic reports. It would bar large government contractors from receiving taxpayer funds and then using that money to buy campaign ads. It would restrict companies from sponsoring a candidate. It is all common sense.

Let me be clear. I personally think we should go further to change the way we finance campaigns. I am the author and lead sponsor of the Fair Elections Now Act, which would allow viable candidates who qualify for the fair elections program to raise a maximum of $100 from any donor. These candidates would receive matching funds and grants in order to compete with those high-rolling candidates who have personal wealth. That would change the system fundamentally, to move toward a system of public financing. Those who criticize it should take heart from the States that have brought it to a referendum, which have said repeatedly that they would much rather have public financing and take the special interests out of politics even if it meant imposing a tax—as we do, for example, with corporations doing business with the Federal Government—a tiny tax, which would generate enough money for the campaigns across the Congress and get us out of this money chase we are currently in. It would change the system of politics fundamentally. It would put the average citizen back in the picture, and I think it would begin to restore confidence.

Until we change the way we finance campaigns, I do not believe we can restore confidence in our political system to a level that it should be. But in the wake of the Citizens United decision, we are moving in the opposite direction. Allowing companies to spend freely and directly on political campaigns—we should at least have the transparency that is being asked in the DISCLOSE bill. Is it asking too much to require a group or company to at least mention who is sponsoring an ad so the American people know who is paying for it? I don't think it is. Once upon a time, many Republicans agreed with me.

I will close with one more quote from the Senator from Kentucky, the minority leader, from an interview years ago on ''Meet the Press.'' Here is what he said: ''Republicans are in favor of disclosure.'' We hope they will be in favor of the DISCLOSE Act, which calls for disclosure. You can't state a position much more clearly than the Senator did. I hope they still feel that way. I hope Senate Republicans will join us in a meaningful disclosure method for campaign finance reform that will move us in the direction of giving the voters more information so they can decide which candidates they want to support and know who is supporting different causes and candidates.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I am not sure what the parliamentary situation is, but I am going to proceed under my leader time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

THE DISCLOSE ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, here we go again, back to the DISCLOSE Act. Americans are speaking out. They want us to focus on the economy, on preventing tax hikes, on creating jobs. What do Democrats do? They turn to the so-called DISCLOSE Act, a bill they say is about transparency in elections but which was drafted behind closed doors, without hearings, without testimony, and without any markups; a bill which is supposed to be about free speech but which picks and chooses who gets the right to engage in political speech and who does not; a bill that is back on the floor for no other reason than the fact that our friends on the other side have decided this week is politics-only week in the Senate. Let's be clear from the outset. That is all this is—pure politics.

Over the past couple of elections, our friends on the other side have gotten a lot of help from their union allies and other outside groups—so much so, in fact, that they were able to outspend their opponents 2 to 1 in 2006 and 3 to 1 in 2008. That is our friends on the other side of the aisle. But now, after spending the last year and a half enacting policies Americans don't like, they want to prevent their opponents from being able to criticize what they have done. They hear Americans speaking out, they see some energy on the other side, and they don't want to take the kind of criticism they have leveled at Republicans for the past 4 years, so they are trying to rig the system to their advantage. That is it. It is quite simple—just to rig the system to their advantage.

The only question here is why our friends on the other side would want to propose something like this when Americans are screaming at them to focus on the economy instead. Just look at the surveys. What are Americans most concerned about? It is no secret that Americans want Congress to focus on jobs and the economy. Yet, over the last 2 months, in the midst of what Democrats are remarkably calling ''recovery summer,'' the President has devoted two of his weekly radio addresses to the Nation to making a personal pitch for this bill.

Today in the Senate, in the middle of the worst recession in memory, the Democratic leadership has decided to spend the next 2 days on the same failed partisan campaign spending bill aimed at giving Democrats a political edge. It is truly astonishing. It seems as if the more Americans say they want Democrats to focus on jobs, the more determined they are to press ahead with some piece of legislation aimed either at killing private sector jobs or, in the case of this bill, preserving their own jobs.

Here we are, in the middle of a recession, with 27 States yesterday reporting increases in unemployment, 14 million Americans looking for work, and a national debt that is putting the very future of the American dream in jeopardy, here we are voting on a bill that amounts to little more than an incumbency protection act for Democrats in Congress. If Americans are looking for one final piece of evidence in this Congress that Democrats have lost perspective and lost touch with Americans, then this is it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

HONORING CONLEY INGRAM

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise for a moment to pause and pay tribute to the life and accomplishments of a citizen of my home community, Judge Conley Ingram. In fact, in a few days a number of members of our community, his friends and associates over his career in law and community service, will join to celebrate his life and achievements and his birthday. He is a remarkable person whom I admire greatly because he has been a mentor to me and the example I have tried to follow. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend that particular program, but today on the floor of the Senate, I wanted to memorialize a true storied jurist of the State of Georgia, probably amongst the top three or four from our State in the history of our State. He is a man who stands shoulder to shoulder with men such as Griffin Bell, the former Attorney General of the United States, and former Assistant Attorney General Larry Thompson.

Conley Ingram has done about everything you can do as an attorney and a lawyer. When he graduated from Emory University 59 years ago and went into the service, he taught at the Judge Advocate School in Charlottesville, VA. From there, he went on to be city attorney, special assistant attorney general, juvenile court judge of the County of Cobb, and went on to become

superior court judge in the County of Cobb. He then founded his own law firm and ran it for a number of years until he became a justice of the Supreme Court of the State of Georgia. After leaving there, he went with the storied firm of Alston & Bird and became probably the Nation's most recognized arbitrator and mediator of any attorney in the country. And not to finish and not to quit, for the last 12 years he has been a senior special superior court judge in Cobb County, GA, serving all the time the citizens of our State.

But his greatest service is the example he shows. He has been selected our Community Citizen of the Year. He received excellence awards for the legacy he has left not just for his work on the bench, not just his work as a lawyer, but his work for the betterment of the community, whether it is the Boys Club or the Girls Club, whether it is his church, or whether it is his neighborhood.

But for me, there is one special thing to say about Judge Conley Ingram: He is a man who takes time for everybody. He is a man who is willing to help. He is a man who would rather find common ground in the interest of both parties than have a winner-take-all philosophy of life.

Probably the greatest blessing of Conley Ingram's life is his wife Sylvia, whom my wife Dianne and I cherish as a dear friend.

So this week in which our community will celebrate the many accomplishments of the 59 years of the practice of law of Judge Conley Ingram and his life in general, I am proud to stand on the floor of the Senate and say: Conley, thank you, not just for what you have done for me but what you have done for so many people in our great State and for this great country, the United States of America.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE DISCLOSE ACT

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about an issue of critical importance to the future of our democracy. I have in my hand the majority opinion titled ''Citizens United.''

This Supreme Court decision, decided on the narrowest of grounds, is of profound importance to our Nation and how the voices of citizens get heard or get drowned out. This decision, Citizens United, is a dagger poised at the heart of American democracy.

Our Nation is unique in world history in that it was founded not on nationality of royal bloodlines but on a simple idea, a simple yet revolutionary idea that the country's people are in charge.

As was so often the case, Abraham Lincoln said it better than most. He said, the United States is a ''government of the people, by the people, for the people.'' What that means is that we elected officials work for the people. They elect us. They are in charge.

But this formula, government by and for the people, cannot survive if our elections are not open, free, and fair, and Citizens United ends open, free, and fair elections in America. This decision says that unlimited secret and foreign funds can be spent on elections in the United States of America. Let me restate that. This decision, Citizens United, says unlimited secret funds can be spent on elections in the United States of America.

This is not just some hypothetical. Reports estimate that over the last few weeks, $24 million has been spent in secret spending, with no ability to trace who put it into campaigns. The results are negative attack ads barraging candidates in State after State after State, under, I am sure, pleasant-sounding names such as Citizens for a Strong America or Citizens for Blue Skies or Citizens for a Better Nation, front groups that are using this secret money, allowed by this decision, to drown out the voice of the American citizen in elections across this land.

Government is not by and for the people if corporations and even foreign corporations and giant government contractors are able to hijack our electoral process to run millions of dollars of attack ads against any candidate or legislator who dares put the public interest ahead of the company's bottom line.

Our Constitution, through the first amendment, puts the highest protection on political speech, recognizing how important it is that citizens be able to debate the merits of candidates and ideas. But the essence of the first amendment is that competing voices should be heard in the marketplace of ideas. The Citizens United decision gave the largest corporations a stadium sound system to drown out the voices of our citizens.

Let me give you some sense of this. Take a single corporation in 2008, Exxon Corporation. Exxon Corporation made a lot of money in 2008. If it had spent just 3 percent of the total net revenue it had that year, that would exceed all the spending by Presidential candidates for the 2008 election. Three percent of a single corporation's net revenues would drown out all the dollars spent by citizens in the Presidential race in the 2008 election. That is the stadium sound system I am talking about.

Think about the scale. My Senate race was far and away the most expensive election in Oregon history. Two candidates together spent about $20 million. To translate that back to a single corporation, Exxon, that would be the amount of money in net profits they made every 10 hours. You get some sense, then, of the challenge.

If you like negative ads, you will love the impact of Citizens United. Imagine what corporations will do to put favored candidates in office. The sheer volume of money could allow corporations to handpick their candidates, providing unlimited support to their campaigns, and take out anyone who dares to stand for the public interest.

The DISCLOSE Act we are debating is not a perfect solution to this attack on American democracy. But it does change one critical feature; that is, secret spending becomes publicly disclosed spending.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle have spoken time and time again about the importance of public disclosure and democracy. One of my colleagues from Texas said:

> I think the system needs more transparency so people can reach their own conclusions. In other words, people should know who is funding that campaign ad.

One of my colleagues from Tennessee:

> To me, campaign finance reform means individual contributions, free speech, and full disclosure. In other words, any individual can give whatever they want as long as it is disclosed every day on the Internet. Otherwise you restrict free speech and favor super rich candidates, candidates with famous names, the media and special interest groups, all of whom can spend unlimited money.

That is a strong statement by my friend and colleague from Tennessee in support of disclosure. The Republican floor leader, speaking in 1997:

> Public dealerships of campaign contributions and spending and spending should be expedited so voters can judge for themselves what is inappropriate.

How can a voter judge the content of the ad if they do not know what money is behind it? So disclosure is something that has been a bipartisan concept. Folks have referred to it as sunshine is the best disinfectant. So this bill brings transparency. The DISCLOSE Act makes the CEO of a company stand by its words. The CEO would have to say, at the end of the ad, that they approved this message, just like political candidates have to do right now.

It is common sense. If a company is willing to spend millions working against a candidate, voters, our citizens, have a right to know who is involved instead of allowing them to hide behind shadowy front groups. Similarly, this bill would require 527 groups, which exist solely to influence elections, to be transparent about who is funding them. Voters have a right to know where ads and campaign dollars come from.

A second issue this act takes on is the pay-to-play issue; that is, the concept that groups that are competing for government contracts and winning those contracts have a particular conflict of interest when it comes to spending large volumes on campaigns. So this gets rid of that conflict of interest. It says it bars government contractors from running campaign ads or