

there 25 years ago, fighting the undue influence of unlimited campaign donations. I cosponsored his 1989 constitutional amendment that would have given Congress power to enact laws regulating the amount of independent expenditures. I was there with him. But I guess times have changed. I am aware that the Republican leader has stated that his views on the matter of campaign finance have changed over the years. What a gross understatement. But as Victor Hugo wrote:

Change your opinions, but keep your principles. Change your leaves, but keep your roots.

At one time the Republican leader was rooted in the principle that the wealthy shouldn't be able to buy public office whether for themselves or for others. Even as recently as late in 2007 he was preaching donor disclosure. What has changed in the last few years?

Over the last several years we have witnessed the Koch brothers trying to buy America, to pump untold millions into our democracy, hoping to get a government that would serve their bottom line and make them more money. The news today says they are out promoting themselves, and that is easy to do because they are worth \$150 billion.

So we are watching the corrupting influence that the Republican leader foretold 27 years ago and many years thereafter before our very eyes. He switched teams. What could have possibly convinced the senior Senator from Kentucky that limitless, untraceable campaign donations aren't really that bad after all?

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now that the President has conducted initial consultations with our allies and stated his objective to degrade and destroy ISIL, it is time to present a strategy to Congress. I hope he will begin to do that today.

He needs to identify military objectives and explain how those ends will be accomplished. He needs to present this plan to Congress and the American people, and where the President believes he lacks authority to execute such a strategy, he needs to explain to Congress how additional authority for the use of force will protect America. The threat from ISIL is real and is growing. It is time for President Obama to exercise some leadership in launching a response.

We know the administration has authorized military actions to protect American lives. Now we need to hear what additional measures will be taken to defeat ISIL.

SPEECH SUPPRESSION

Earlier today one Democratic Senator urged his colleagues to get serious about the real challenges facing our country—challenges such as dealing with the threat of ISIL. He implored fellow Democrats not to focus all their time instead “doing things that are of lesser importance.”

Yet his voice seems to have been ignored by the Democrats who run the Senate, because here we stand debating their proposal on whether to take an eraser—an eraser—to the First Amendment. Here we are debating whether to grant politicians the extraordinary authority to ban speech they don't like. That is what Democratic leaders have brought to the floor this week as their top priority. It is a measure so extreme it could even open the door to government officials banning books and pamphlets that threaten or annoy them. That is not my argument. That is essentially the Obama administration's own position, one that his own lawyers advocated in the Supreme Court in the Citizens United case. As one USA Today columnist put it at the time: “It isn't often that a government lawyer stands before the Supreme Court and acknowledges that, yes, it would be constitutional to ban a book. But that is what happened.”

Truly shocking.

These are the depths to which the Obama administration and its Democratic majority appear willing to drag our country in order to retain their hold on power. They are tired of listening to criticism of their failed policies. They are sick of having to sell the middle class on ideas that actually hurt the middle class. And with the Democrats' fragile Senate majority hanging by a thread, it seems they are done playing with the normal rules of democracy. It seems they would rather just rewrite the rules altogether to shut up their critics and shut down their opponents, even as they continue to give a path to leftwing tycoons they like—folks who preach higher taxes and more regulations for everybody else—while jealously guarding pet projects and sweetheart deals for themselves.

The aim here, just as with the IRS scandal, is to use the levers of power to shut down the voice of we the people when we the people don't see things their way. The First Amendment is the only thing standing in the way.

We all know the real reason Senate Democrats are so determined to push this measure now. They are not actually all that serious about passing it this week. In fact, they designed it to fail because they think its failure would help turn more leftwingers out to the polls. The entire spectacle is mostly about saving the jobs of Democratic Senators come November. Yet it must be admitted that it is getting harder to tell which of our Democratic friends are cynical in their support of this and which are sincere, because the number of true believers in speech sup-

pression appears to be growing on the other side, and that is really worrying for the future of our democracy.

So look, if the Democrats who run Washington are so determined to force the Senate into debate over repealing the free speech protections of the First Amendment, then fine, let's have a full and proper debate. Let's make the country see what this is really all about. Let's expose this extremist effort to the light of public scrutiny.

I suspect our Democratic friends don't really want that, though. I suspect they hope to just drop a few talking points, have their proposal fail, shoot some indignant e-mails to their supporters and move on. I don't think they counted on Senators standing up for the American people. I don't think they counted on Senators exposing their plans to entrench the tools of government speech suppression. So they would rather not have a debate they can't win.

Then here is a better idea. We all just spent the past several weeks back in our home States talking to our constituents. They have a lot on their minds these days—important issues they expect the Democrat-run Senate to address—things such as high unemployment, rising health care costs, and an ongoing crisis at the border. I, for one, will be interested to hear how repealing part of the First Amendment creates jobs for Americans or reduces health care costs. The answer of course is it doesn't, and the Republican-controlled House has already sent over countless bills that continue to collect dust on the majority leader's desk. There are many bills on job creation alone, including legislation that passed the House, with significant bipartisan support.

So if Senate Democrats want to take up some of that serious House-passed legislation instead of endless designed-to-fail political votes, we will be happy to do it. Just say the word.

Let's end the Democrats' endless gridlock and get some bills to the President's desk for once because Americans are not demanding that Congress repeal the free speech protections of the First Amendment. That is certainly not on their minds. They are looking to us to work together to get some things done for them for a change, and we can as soon as our Democratic friends want to get serious.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I agree with the Republican leader's defense of the First Amendment, but the constitutional amendment before us is not about limiting free speech. My Democratic colleagues and I are trying to address the special interest money that threatens to create a government of elected officials who are beholden to a few wealthy individuals.

As the respected Justice John Paul Stevens recently told us, money is not speech. Of course it isn't, and we know that.