

States Senate and in the administration.

Our basic democratic institutions are threatened by the vast amount of money that is now finding its way into campaigns. It comes in straight-up contributions to individual Members, it comes from Political Action Committees, it comes from soft money, it comes from independent expenditures.

We are having a primary in California. The primary is in June. This is only the end of March. Three candidates have already reported almost \$25 million being spent for the Governor's race. One candidate has reported \$18 million being spent.

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Pretty soon, this will be a hobby for rich people, or this will be a place where only those who have the money of the special interests will come to work, and the people will take second best.

Mr. Speaker, we all know, those of us who serve here, those of us who go through campaigns, we all know that the influence of money is getting more and more pervasive in every decision made in the Congress of the United States; that it is distorting the decision-making process; that it is corroding the underpinnings of the democratic institutions. And we cannot allow it to continue.

But what did we find out today? After many, many disruptions last year in the House of Representatives to try to get the Republican leadership to give us a vote, to give us a fair and open debate on competing plans, to debate this subject in front of the American public, what did we find today? That Speaker GINGRICH has decided that we will get 20 minutes on each side of an issue to decide campaign finance reform.

Mr. Speaker, we just spent 5½ hours here debating a bill of no urgency, a bill that was eventually defeated. We could have debated it all day today. We could have debated it in the weeks where the Congress has only worked 1 and 2 and 3 days a week. We get paid for 5 days a week, we get paid for 7 days a week, but most of this year we have been working 2 and 3 days a week. We could have debated campaign finance on any one of those days. But they waited right until we get to the Easter break, and then they said we will give 20 minutes.

Why did they give us 20 minutes and why did they hand-pick the bill that we would vote on? Because they know that that bill does not have enough support to pass. They know there is in this House a bipartisan bill that will reform this system, that will pass, and they will not let us vote on that. Twenty minutes or no 20 minutes. They are cooking the books, they are rigging the game, they are tilting the field, all against reform.

Even those huge majorities in this country want the current system of finance, of campaign finances reformed

and changed and made more democratic. But the Republican leadership does not even want to let us debate the bill. They do not want to let us amend the bill. They do not want to let us change the bill. They want to put a bill out here that they know will not pass, and force us to kill it, and then they can blame Democrats or Republicans or liberals and conservatives and say, "They killed campaign finance reform."

No, Mr. Speaker; NEWT GINGRICH, the Speaker of the House who sets the agenda, who sets the calendar, he killed campaign finance reform because he was afraid of the debate. He pledges allegiance to the flag every day. He talks about democracy. And he is afraid of the debate in front of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, how cynical can one become when they cannot trust the American people and cannot trust their representatives, so they have to schedule the debate so they can get an outcome that a majority of the House does not want? It is a terrible, terrible day for democracy and it is a terrible day for our democratic institutions, and it is a terrible day for the American voter because the race will continue to go to the people that accept more special interest money and the most money and not the best candidate in the race.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PITTS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM GIVEN SHORT SHRIFT IN HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, as I listened to this afternoon's disgraceful announcement given to us, I gather, with some glee by the Majority leader, that the American people would be denied any free and fair debate on the issue of campaign finance reform, I could not help but reflect on how this Congress began back in January of 1997.

Mr. Speaker, we assembled here on this floor to begin the people's business. We have come now through the full year of 1997 and well into 1998. It was on that very first day in January of 1997 that we cast a vote on the issue of campaign finance reform and were denied an opportunity to move forward on it in this Congress. And repeatedly, over the course of 1997 and 1998, there have been those of us, both Democrats and Republicans, who have come to this floor asking not to have it exactly our way, the way we would write a

campaign finance bill, but to have a free and fair debate of this issue that goes to the core of the problems that surround this institution, the Congress and the Government of the United States and the way that it operates.

Over that time period, we first were told by some that we could accomplish the issue of campaign finance reform in time for our Nation's birthday, on July 4 of last year. That time came and went. I think some looked to that date, because a couple of years earlier Speaker GINGRICH went up to New Hampshire and shook hands and smiled with President Clinton and said that they would move forward on real campaign finance reform. That was in 1995. He delayed for a year and then engaged in the kind of sham maneuver we have seen this afternoon in order to kill campaign finance reform in 1996.

So we came to the fall of last year, after many speeches and many demands for action on campaign finance reform and, lo and behold, the majority leader, the same gentleman from Texas who stood before us today to kill campaign finance reform, he announced that we would have action on campaign finance reform last fall before the Congress recessed. Of course, as we all know, that time went by and no action occurred. No debate on any proposal was permitted.

But we heard, with some degree of incredulity I suppose, as we listened to the discussion on the last day of that session, the Republican leadership assembled upstairs in front of the press and they announced a great task force. They had all of these proposals they were going to put together and they were going to put a Republican fix on the campaign finance reform system and they were going to be ready to debate that when we gathered here in 1998.

Well, now we are in 1998, and we reached the day yesterday when they were going to present their great proposal, and they have since found now that they have presented it, that it is being rejected by the majority of Republicans. And so they have decided to pull down that proposal and to deny us full and fair debate of that, because if we began debating that fully and fairly, we might be able to offer a motion to recommit it to the committee and get some genuine reform of the campaign finance system.

So, Mr. Speaker, on a day when many Members of this Congress will be traveling to New Mexico to honor our distinguished colleague, the late Steve Schiff, at his funeral, on that day they have scheduled the debate in which any of the Members who will be traveling to the funeral will be unable to participate. And should they get back here in time to vote on Monday night, if only a majority of this body votes to approve campaign finance reform, it will be defeated because Speaker GINGRICH and Majority Leader ARMEY and, to hear the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) say it, all of the Republican

leadership has agreed on one thing: The only way they will permit any Democrat or any Republican to discuss and debate the issue of campaign finance reform is in a contrived procedure designed for one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to ensure that campaign finance is dead and gone for this session, that nothing will happen.

Mr. Speaker, why is this issue, which frankly, as we travel around the country, we do not hear on the tips of the tongues of the ordinary working people of this country, why is it so important? Well, the reason that it is so critical that we have a full debate is that it goes to every other issue that occurs in this Congress. Because increasingly, there are Americans out there who say that in this Congress we do not decide issues, whatever they might be, in terms of what is good for America. Rather, we decide them principally on the basis of who gave how much to whom and how often they did it.

It is that kind of corrupting influence in our democracy, to the extent it actually occurs, and more importantly perhaps to the extent that that is the way the American people feel about this system and they lose faith and confidence in our democracy because of the role of big money and corrupting this system, that this is so critical.

Perhaps some in America are concerned with our tax system or with Social Security or education or child care. If we are to deal with any of those issues constructively, we have to reform this system, and that is why today's action is so disgraceful.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TIAHRT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SAXTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WHO ARE WE REALLY PUNISHING: THE TOBACCO COMPANIES OR PEOPLE WHO CAN LEAST AFFORD THE TAX INCREASE?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LEWIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues of those Americans who are being pushed aside in our zeal to punish the tobacco companies and curb youth smoking. The rhetoric and demagoguery waged against tobacco gives new meaning to the "politics of fear." If only there was the same commit-

ment to wipe out illegal drugs, violence and illegitimacy, the hypocrisy of this campaign would not be so blatant.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. From no new taxes to lining up for pushing to the limits the most regressive tax in America. Mr. Speaker, let me say it once and say it loud and clear: A tax is a tax is a tax.

The Senate Budget Committee resolution to raise tobacco excise taxes by \$1.50 is far from an act of courage and wisdom. Rather, the decision is borne out of fear, expedience, and illusion. This tax is income redistribution at its worst, pure and simple. The very defenders of our poor and middle-class citizens prefer to ignore the ugly truth of the proposed excise tax increase. Instead, they have convinced themselves that they know what is best for Americans. Once again, these Members of Congress will look the other way because they know that already over 50 percent of the Federal cigarette excise tax is paid by American taxpayers who earn less than \$30,000 a year. Even worse, only 7 percent is paid by folks with incomes over \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot hide from the burden that this huge tax increase will have on our lower-income families. For someone who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day, our Federal Government will be taking an additional \$550 a year, and this is no small change if someone is making less than \$20,000 a year.

And where is all the money going? For starters, the antitobacco trial lawyers are lining up at the trough, when and if the States ever receive their portion of the new taxes and direct payments from the tobacco companies. But that is not all. We also have the Conrad and Kennedy bills, among others, that are ready to launch a new era of big government with hard-earned dollars from low-income taxpayers.

Even worse, there are some Members who believe we can use this tax increase on smokers and pay for other Americans to enjoy a tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, I will be among the first to support a much-needed tax relief bill. But the excise tax is an income transfer, not a tax break. Who are we really punishing? The tobacco companies? Or people who can least afford the tax increase?

The fact is that this new cost will be passed on to the consumer by the companies, whether it is from a tax or a national settlement. Twenty-five percent of American adults who choose to buy a legal product, albeit one that causes serious health problems, may soon be lining the pockets of trial lawyers and funding new Federal programs that have precious little to do with stopping kids from smoking.

We are told that smokers must be held accountable for the increased medical cost brought on by smoking-related illnesses. There is a myth that smokers impose higher medical costs on society and this justifies the in-

crease in our Federal excise tax. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine tells us otherwise. The uncomfortable truth is that the lifetime medical costs of smokers are smaller than those of nonsmokers.

No doubt that many of us have encountered the suffering of a friend, a relative or a loved one who has been diagnosed with lung cancer or perhaps emphysema. I believe there are more effective ways, however, that will help us convince young and older Americans alike that smoking does have dire consequences for them, and for themselves and for the people that care for them.

One young man from Murray, Kentucky, said it best during his recent testimony to the House Committee on Commerce. The answer to reducing teen smoking lies with the family, and I quote, "This can be done in the home, not in Washington." His answer is hard to argue with, but I would add that our Federal Government can play a valuable role in supporting this message at home by helping to educate our youth through the media and the classroom.

We have made tremendous progress in this country in reducing the prevalence of smoking, and we can do even more with realistic constructive policies. Are we going to further punish adults who choose to smoke with higher taxes? Or is it time to embrace an imperfect but comprehensive settlement that, in the words of the Louisville Courier Journal Editorial Board, seeks an opportunity to make smoking more expensive and less attractive, especially to kids?

Congress must find the courage to adopt sensible national tobacco legislation. Ample evidence here at home and around the world shows the folly of taxing cigarettes out of the marketplace. Look no further than to our Canadian neighbors to understand the very real possibility of black market imports of cigarettes that will elude high Federal tax. Despite the fact that Canada doubled its tax on cigarettes in 1983, the increased levy has failed to reduce youth smoking and may have even made it more difficult to control because of smuggling. In our own Nation's history, we need to look no further than the era of prohibition to see how our government can create black market windfalls for criminals.

If we follow the mad rush towards another new tax, we will begin to destroy the livelihood of thousands of small family farms. Yes, we can spend millions of dollars to retrain these farmers, but I assure my colleagues that Congress cannot replace the way of life and culture they have cherished in our State for generations.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, Americans and people throughout the world will continue to smoke for years to come despite all our efforts to tax tobacco to death. I urge my colleagues to seek a solution that strives for prevention and cessation, not the punishment of fifty million Americans and thousands of tobacco farmers and workers.