

to strike, I think, a true course consistent with the great traditions in this country of meeting the challenges of each generation.

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

(Mr. UNDERWOOD 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 California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

IN SUPPORT OF THE SHAYS-MEEHAN BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LUCAS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, this evening the Blue Dog Coalition is pleased to take this opportunity on the eve of debate regarding the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform legislation to stand in strong support of this important reform.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight as chairman of the Blue Dog Caucus on Campaign Finance Reform to voice my support for the Shays-Meehan bill. This bill represent real reform, and I strongly encourage my colleagues to support it.

□ 2000

The Shays-Meehan bill is the only campaign finance reform bill that effectively deals with soft money and the sham issue ads.

In 1996, \$262 million of unregulated soft money was spent on campaigns. Estimates of the 2000 election place that amount of money, soft money, at about one-half billion dollars. That is billion with a B.

This money from unrevealed sources has the effect of drowning out the voice of the average citizen, and it is often used to run the so-called issue ads funded by the wealthy interest groups which oftentimes flood a candidate's district just days before an election. These ads are put together by unknown, unaccountable sources and are often misleading or sometimes simply untrue. Of course, no one knows where the ad came from, so no one is called to task for these misleading, sham issue ads.

As the recent Enron debacle shows, Congress must avoid even the appearance of impropriety. I cannot say whether or not the executives at Enron broke the law or received special interest as a result of the \$1,671,000 of soft

money they gave in the 2000 election cycle campaign. They do, after all, deserve a fair hearing, and we are about that process now, but I know that the mere suspicion by the public that Enron did receive special treatment erodes public confidence in our government.

There is no question that the campaign finance system is not working well for the American people. An individual or corporation can literally pour thousands of dollars into the system without identifying themselves or what they represent. I believe we can reform the system to shift the balance back to the people and emphasize the voices of average citizens, not special interest groups, reforming a system that will enable us to focus more attention on the needs of all of our citizens, educating our children, passing a real Patients' Bill of Rights and protecting Social Security and Medicare.

Campaign finance reform is the right thing to do. While it is not the be-all, end-all in government reform, it is a major step in the right direction. The confidence of the American people is at stake. We must return our government to the people.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I have several fellow members of my Blue Dog coalition who are here to speak. The first speaker we have in the coalition to join us this evening, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD), a strong supporter of campaign finance reform since the 105th Congress and the Blue Dog communications chairman. I am happy to yield time to him so he can speak on this subject tonight.

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LUCAS), who has been a strong advocate and leader for campaign finance reform since his election to this Congress, to this U.S. House, in 1998. I also want to recognize the efforts of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), who came into this body in the 1996 election, as did I, for his strong leadership, and of course we all, Mr. Speaker, recognize the leaders in this body, the bipartisan leadership that is provided by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), who have been strong and long and tireless advocates for campaign finance reform.

Mr. Speaker, I came to this body after the 1996 election, and our freshman class spent some time together developing what we thought was the most important issues that we could work on together. This freshman class was made up of both parties, members of both parties that came in that 1996 election, which chose together in a bipartisan way the issue of campaign finance reform to work on, and so we have been working, trying to get the campaign finance system of this Nation reformed since that 1996 election.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues know that our democratic system of government works best when the our indi-

vidual constituents participate in the largest numbers. We have had diminished participation in our government election systems over the last 20 or 30 years, and I think that diminished participation is due in large part to cynicism. The public has become very cynical about campaigns and how they are financed and who controls them and so on.

I think they are cynical because the public believes that the current system is skewed to give the wealthiest people in this country and the largest special interest groups a greater say in shaping our public policy.

The largest culprit in that cynicism, that causes that cynicism, I believe, is a soft money loophole. Closing this soft money loophole will restore public confidence into our campaign financing system in our elections. Grassroots and personal participation, which we all know, the more personal individual participation we have in the electoral process, the better our democratic system works. If we can improve personal participation and grassroots efforts, then we will go a long way toward improving our system and the participation in that system, and our democracy will work much better.

The political parties will once again, Mr. Speaker, become a resource for manpower and strategy rather than a conduit for unregulated money, which they, over the last 30 years since our last major campaign finance reform has happened, and these parties simply in the most part now have become a conduit for large sums of unregulated soft money. The national parties were healthy and vigorous before the onslaught of soft money, and they can be healthy and vigorous again once we eliminate soft money. In fact, many of us believe that soft money has broken down the effectiveness of our national parties because it dilutes the influence to outside organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now to fix this problem. We need to pass a clean bill that fixes our broken campaign finance system. We passed this bill, this U.S. House passed this bill in the 105th Congress, and it passed the bill in the 106th Congress, under the leadership of the people that I have mentioned earlier, but in both cases the other body failed to take up and pass campaign finance reform.

It is time now, Mr. Speaker, that Congress takes the big money out of the elections process and make sure that everyone has equal access to their government. Mr. Speaker, the President has promised if we will send him a reasonable bill, he will sign it, and it is time now that the Congress produce that bill that the President will look favorably upon and restore confidence to the public in our electoral system.

I want to thank the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. LUCAS) for allowing me to speak.

Mr. LUCAS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) for his remarks.