

economy intangibles are included, the positive economic outlook becomes all the brighter for us as a Nation.

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

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

CAMPAIGN REFORM LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I come tonight because I am concerned over this Republican Congress that is now speaking about having further campaign reform legislation put before us tomorrow, and I rise tonight to clarify the myths and to speak the truth about the reforms that we have done, the reforms that are not needed, and the reforms that this Republican House is about to undertake.

You would think, Mr. Speaker, that the scandals that are permeating the Congress would be a wake-up call for the majority not to continue their business as usual in terms of running the people's House. Yet, they have introduced H.R. 4975 as a feeble answer to their ethics problems.

Unfortunately, the bill that is going to come before us, called a reform campaign bill, will not only be a bogus bill, but it includes language that restricts the first amendment rights of Americans.

Instead, the majority reveals their ongoing and reckless infatuation by thwarting the constitutional freedom of speech and association rights of concerned citizen groups. Now, we know these groups were under the BCRA law that are called 527s, and these groups, Mr. Speaker, were groups that had never really had a voice in the political process.

In this last election, they came out and they were a very strong force in providing an increasing voter participation, giving voice to the voiceless and becoming more involved in this democracy of ours.

When I hear the Republicans talk about gaping loopholes that they must close, how do you close gaping loopholes when we have a chart that speaks about total U.S. voter turnout? This is not gaping loopholes, for heaven's sake. This is democracy.

In 1990, we had a 105.1 million voter turnout. In the 2000 election year, we had a 110.8 million turnout. In 2004, we had a record-breaking 125.7 million people become involved in this political process. So why are we now trying to pass legislation that merely muffles the mouths and the voices of those who want to take part in this democracy?

When the majority of Democrats and a handful of Republicans voted for this Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, we sought to sever the connections between Federal office holders and the raising of non-Federal money, which is so-called soft money. BCRA, which is the campaign bill, was necessary, Mr. Speaker, to cut the perceived corrupting link between office holders, the formation and adoption of Federal policies, and soft money; and yet the majority is bringing us a bill that is so broad in its application that it stands to severely hamper voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities for civic-minded, nonpartisan organizations. It casts such a wide net that it will ensnare groups whose activities Congress should be promoting, not impeding. This is America. We should be promoting democracy, not impeding it.

By failing to distinguish between groups whose activities are designed to influence the election of clearly identified Federal candidates and those whose sole purpose it is to enhance participation, this legislation imposes too high of a price on election activities.

Now we have heard that the 527s do not have to report. So wrong, Mr. Speaker.

The Internal Revenue Service suggests that during an election year the political organizations have the option of filing on either a quarterly or a monthly schedule, and these organizations must continue on this same filing schedule for the entire calendar year. So it is absurd for them to say that these organizations do not have disclosure and do not file. In the last 6 years, Congress has increased the regulations of independent political committees organized under the section of 527s of the Internal Revenue Code.

Mr. Speaker, we must not allow this legislation to pass this floor. We must continue to allow the American people to have a voice in this democracy. We must continue to have American voices heard.

When the majority of Democrats and a handful of Republicans voted for the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, they sought to sever the connection between Federal officeholders and the raising of non-federal money, so called "soft money." BCRA was necessary to cut the perceived corrupting link between officer holders, the formation and adoption of federal policies, and soft money.

The majority's legislation is so broad in its application that it stands to severely hamper voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities of civic minded non-partisan organizations. It casts such a wide net that it will ensnare groups whose activities Congress should be promoting, not impeding. By failing to distinguish between groups whose activities are designed to influence the election of clearly identified Federal candidates and those whose sole purpose is to enhance participation, this legislation imposes too high a price on election activity.

My particular concern is that the fundamental rights and needs of all Americans, including the voices of women, the elderly, and

the poor, not be left out of the political dialog merely because of the perceived notion that a few millionaires are funding all 527's. Americans are playing an ever-increasing role in holding public officials accountable for their actions through 1st Amendment protections, public policy debate, and the shaping of American democracy.

The proponents of this bill like to argue that by passing this bill, it will be impossible for wealthy individuals to "unfairly" impact elections. Wrong again. Ending 527's will not end the ability of wealthy donors and wealthy corporations to impact elections. They still have a multitude of ways to do so by donating to trade associations like 501(c)(6)'s, many of which have less stringent, not more stringent, reporting requirements than 527's. The majority seems incredibly troubled by the independent voices of concerned citizens, but there is nothing in the law that could stop any individual from financing TV ads on her own. Nevertheless, the real truth is that many 527's are predominantly financed by small donor contributions from individuals who are concerned about holding their elected leaders accountable for failing to address the very issues important to them.

The majority's priorities are misplaced. Without our assistance, few victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will be able to vote in the upcoming elections, wounded war veterans still struggle to obtain adequate health care, and gas prices continue to soar skyward.

The majority should not be in the business of legislating for partisan gain at the expense of the American people.

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

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

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to assume the time of the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LATHAM).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, people sometimes resort to scurrilous personal abuse or childish sarcasm when their case is weak. Let me repeat: people sometimes resort to scurrilous personal abuse or childish sarcasm when their case is weak.

For instance, on foreign policy, you know instantly when someone uses the word "isolationist," they are resorting to name calling, rather than a serious discussion on the merits or the lack thereof.

On the issue of immigration, the scurrilous, personal abuse is when people imply or say that someone is a racist or a bigot if they want our immigration laws enforced.