

*"Someone once said that every form of government has one characteristic peculiar to it and if that characteristic is lost, the government will fall. In a monarchy it is affection and respect for the royal family . . . in a dictatorship it is fear . . . in a representative government such as ours it is virtue. If virtue goes, the government fails."*  
-Ronald Reagan, July 9, 1979

Recently, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to amend the First Amendment of the Constitution to limit the right of free speech. Wonder why you didn't hear about that? It's all under the guise of Campaign Finance Reform.

While "Campaign Finance Reform" sounds great in name, we have to look into what it actually does to realize its true intent. Polls show that most Americans rank this issue very low on the grand scale of things even after the Enron brouhaha.

First off, I take issue with the very premise on which the bill's proponents stand to argue for the bill: that private influence in government is bad. We are a representative republic and we tread on thin ice when we start restricting people's rights to do so. Even with the matter of large corporate donations, someone has yet to explain to me how corporations can buy the liberalism of the Democratic Party and the Conservatism of the Republican Party at the same time. Since when does Congress have the right to decide who has more of a right to free speech anyway? Most major corporations donate to both causes and you can be sure that when one corporate cause is passed, it has defeated some other special interest group that also has big money.

What does CFR do specifically? Most notably it bans "soft-money," which would weaken both national political parties. Who this hurts the most is a candidate that is challenging an incumbent, as they tend to attract fewer donors than incumbents.

What is most disturbing about this bill, however, is that it bans advertisements mentioning an incumbent's name within 30 of a primary or 60 days of a general election. The fact of the matter is that most voters don't even start paying attention until that time span and once in the voting booth, who are they going to go with? The name they have heard of: the incumbent.

Right now indications are that President Bush will sign this bill into law despite a letter that he wrote in March 2001 stating that any CFR bill would have to "help political parties more fully engage citizens in the political process" (this bill impedes it), "protect the rights of citizen groups to engage in issue advocacy" (this bill tears it down), "shouldn't favor incumbents over challengers" (what is this if it isn't the Incumbency Protection Act?), and should "include provisions protecting shareholders and union members from having their money spent on politics against their wishes" (this bill lacks that).

I support the President on most issues, but if he signs this bill into law, he will not only be going back on his written word on the issue, but violating his oath of office to protect the Constitution of the United States.

What we need here is not another law supposedly self-restricting politicians (what they're saying here is, "You can't trust us!"). What we have is a bill saying that our representatives can't trust *us* from corrupting *them*. What we need is exactly the opposite of what this bill does: one that encourages participation in the political process by common people prodding their elected officials to be men and women of virtue.

Of course, the reason why the House passed a bill that would be more characteristic of the skullduggery of the Senate is because of the Enron scandal. I use the word "scandal" loosely here because there is no evidence of a political scandal in connection with the Bush administration.

The reasoning behind all of this is that Bush and Ken Lay are both from Texas and Lay donated to Bush's presidential campaign. So somebody must have gotten something from somebody, right?

Well, the last I checked, Enron is bankrupt and Mr. Lay himself is in some pretty hot water (as he should be), but unfortunately it looks like his investment in the Bush presidency did not benefit him very much. The fact of the matter is that Enron donated to pretty much everyone in Washington, including even the Gore/Lieberman campaign in 2000.

OK, I admit it. I've misled you a little bit. There is in fact evidence of corruption with Enron. Unfortunately for Democrats so desperately trying to bring down President Bush's astronomical approval ratings in a crucial election year, this evidence points to none other than ex-President Bill Clinton.

It was during the Clinton administration that Enron flourished and when it was handed out about 1.2 billion dollars in loans as the company was donating about 2 million dollars to Democratic causes. Only one out of twenty proposed projects were refused under the Clinton. Ken Lay slept in the Lincoln Bedroom in the Clinton White House and even played golf with the ex-Prez from time to time.

But wait, there's more! There was a 100,000 donation to the Democratic National Committee by Enron right before it was given final approval for its Dabhol project in India. This all took place in June 1996, five months before Clinton's re-election.

Former Clinton Treasury secretary was offered a seat on Enron's board of directors by Ken Lay. It was Mr. Rubin who lobbied for a bailout of Enron in the fall of 2001.

Before you say, "They all do it," there was not one loan given out by either the Reagan or the first Bush administrations. There was only one case where insurance was provided for an Enron power project in 1992.

Enron was supposedly President Bush's Whitewater, and as soon as he commits perjury, as did Clinton, I'll be the first on the bandwagon for his impeachment. But before believing all the accusations about Enron, dig deeper and you'll find that this is yet another scandal connected to Bill Clinton, the only elected President ever to be impeached. But then again it is all just a vast right-wing conspiracy isn't it?