

NEWS RELEASE

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Campaign finance 'reform' is attempt to muzzle third parties, Libertarians say

9 million voters rejected both Clinton and Dole

WASHINGTON, DC — Americans voted for third-party candidates in record numbers in 1996 — so Republicans and Democrats now plan to pass new campaign finance laws to choke off that competition, warns the nation's third-largest party, the Libertarians.

"Democrats and Republicans want to impose crushing burdens on the ability of third parties to raise money and communicate with voters," said party Chairman Steve Dasbach. "This proposed legislation is a dagger aimed at the heart of third parties."

Recent reports that Bill Clinton rented out the White House's Lincoln Bedroom to campaign donors for hundreds of thousands of dollars shouldn't surprise anyone, Dasbach said today.

"What is surprising is that the major parties are using tawdry episodes like these as an excuse to write a new layer of laws aimed squarely at their competition," he said.

In the '96 presidential election over 9 million Americans — or 10% of all voters — pulled the lever for third parties. Nevertheless, Congress is considering new restrictions on their sources of contributions. Senators Russell Feingold (D-WI) and John McCain (R-AZ) have proposed banning PACs, requiring that 60% of money raised in a congressional race comes from within that district, and limiting overall campaign spending.

"The idea that we need to limit campaign spending is preposterous," Dasbach said. "Americans spend twice as much money every year on yogurt as they do on political campaigns."

Dasbach suggested two positive reforms instead:

* Eliminate government financing of campaigns. "The public has had a chance to vote on this idea — and 80% reject it," said Dasbach. "Only 20% of Americans checked the box on their tax returns authorizing federal funding for the 1996 presidential campaign."

* Allow individuals to give more money. "If Congress were to adjust contribution limits for inflation — which it hasn't done in 20 years — the legal amount individuals could donate to candidates would rise from \$1,000 to \$3,000," Dasbach said.

One thing that is definitely not needed, said Dasbach, is more federal regulations.

"Another round of so-called reform won't work," he said. "Instead, the government should repeal the laws and undo the damage it has done, rather than making things worse."

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