

NEWS



Libertarian Party

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The Big Lie behind McCain-Feingold — and the 'high cost' of potato chips

It's not about soft money, Libertarians say. It's about protecting incumbents.

WASHINGTON, DC — Anyone who believes that the Senate passed the McCain-Feingold bill on Monday night as a way to crack down on the "obscene" amount of soft money in politics should consider this fact, Libertarians say: Americans spend ten times as much money every year on *potato chips* as they do on giving soft money to political parties.

"Politicians have created a false issue — the influence of soft money — to divert attention from the real purpose of McCain-Feingold," said Libertarian Party National Director Steve Dasbach. "This legislation has only one goal: Protecting the jobs of Capitol Hill incumbents."

The Senate passed the McCain-Feingold bill Monday night by a vote of 59-41 amid promises to "rid the nation's campaign finance system of the corrupting influence of soft money" — the contributions that corporations, labor unions, and individuals make for party-building activities such as voter registration drives.

Yet the total amount of soft money collected by political parties over the past two-year election cycle is just \$410 million, according to a new study by the Cato Institute. By comparison, Americans spend an average of \$4.8 billion a year — more than ten times as much — on potato chips.

Here's why McCain-Feingold should be called the Incumbent Protection Act of 2001:

- It shuts off funding for challengers. "Even though soft money is relatively insignificant, much of it enables parties to support challengers — which explains why incumbents wanted to ban it," Dasbach said. "Most contributions from political action committees, however, go to incumbents, which is why Senators left PAC money untouched."

- It stifles criticism of incumbents.

"To muzzle political opponents, McCain-Feingold makes it a crime to mention the name of a federal candidate in any radio or television ad run by a corporation or labor union within 60 days of an election," Dasbach said. "This gag-the-opposition strategy isn't just unconstitutional; it's the kind of tactic employed by petty dictators in countries that don't even *have* constitutions, like Cuba, China, and North Korea.

"So, does your Senator want his lifetime job so badly that he is willing to sabotage the competition and vandalize the Constitution in order to get it? If he voted for McCain-Feingold, the answer is yes."

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