

March 28, 2007

BENNETT GETS AGREEMENT FROM FEINSTEIN TO HOLD APRIL HEARING ON HIS AMENDMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today Senate Rules Committee Ranking Member Bob Bennett (R-Utah) gave the following statement after he and Chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) agreed to hold a hearing next month on his amendment to repeal the limit on coordinated expenditures between candidates and parties.

Below is the full text of Bennett's opening statement:

Thank you Madame Chairman. I do hope we don't take a full three months to schedule a hearing. I hope we can find sometime within three weeks or so to have the hearing. I recognize you have pressures, but I would like to have the hearing while this issue remains somewhat current.

I must confess this has been a very interesting experience for me to announce my intention to move an amendment and immediately become the target of all kinds of attacks. I will save my description of this for the time when we do have the hearing, but I want to focus on one particular area that demonstrates what has happened. On November 3, 2006, The Washington Post published an editorial which said:

"The 2006 campaign has pointed out one particularly ridiculous aspect of campaign finance law that ought to be fixed before 2008. The rules limit how much political parties can spend on candidates in consultation with them but allow parties to spend unlimited amounts on behalf of candidates so long as they act 'independently.' There is no good reason to force the political parties to engage in this charade of setting up independent groups. There is every reason to set up the system that requires those who underwrite ads to take responsibility for them."

That is the statement of the Washington Post in November.

When I have taken the Washington Post at their word and tried to move to reduce this ridiculous aspect of campaign finance law, today they say:

"Enter Senator Bob Bennett to gum up the wheels. He has proposed an amendment that would do away with limits on how much parties can spend in coordination with their candidates. He maintains that his proposal will increase the transparency of the underlying legislation, but it's clear that the best and probably only chance for this proposal is if the committee approves a clean unadulterated bill."

I am not trying to gum up the works. I am not trying to sneak anything by anybody. I am trying to clean up a particularly ridiculous aspect of campaign finance law to which, as far as I can tell, there is no objection. The chairman has appropriately pointed out that there is no objection to the underlying bill, and it seemed to me logical that while we are passing one non-objectionable bill with campaign finance reform, we might as well do two at the same time. I have been attacked as trying to put a "poison

pill" on this bill. I have been attacked by the Post as trying to "gum up the works." I have wondered, would they have had the same reaction if it had been a Democrat who was taking the advice of the Washington Post? Maybe this atmosphere has been so poisoned by the rhetoric that the assumption is when a Republican tries to clean up the bill, there is some nefarious goal behind it.

To make it clear that there is no nefarious goal behind my actions, I have agreed not to introduce this amendment. I will put it forward as a free-standing bill, and I do ask that you expedite hearings on it so we can get those who have announced their support for my amendment in the past and then in this atmosphere attacked me for offering it, can have an opportunity to come before this committee and explain their seemingly illogical switch of positions.

I thank you for your courtesy, and I will look forward to the hearings. I would ask that I be added as an original co-sponsor to the underlying bill to make it clear that I have never had any attempt to kill the bill. I am just trying to do some good government around here, but the Post seems to object.

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