513, the 527 Reform Act of 2006. H.R. 513 takes an important step in closing a ''soft-money'' loophole by requiring 527 groups to comply with the same federal campaign laws that political parties and political action committees must follow.

In fact, the Federal Election Commission should have already done this. A federal district judge in Washington recently called for action, ruling that the Federal Election Commission had ''failed to present a reasoned explanation'' for not requiring 527 groups to register as political committees.

H.R. 513 will close this FEC-created loophole that has allowed 527 groups, of both parties, to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in unlimited soft money to influence presidential and congressional elections without complying with campaign finance laws.

During the last election cycle, 527 groups raised $426 million. Likewise, much of the soft money came from a relatively small number of very wealthy individuals. According to campaign finance scholar Anthony Corrado, just 25 individuals accounted for $146 million raised by Democratic and Republican 527 groups that spent money to influence the 2004 federal elections. And, we are already seeing an increase in the rate at which 527s are raising money this election cycle.

If the primary role of 527 groups is to influence federal elections, which it clearly is, they must play by the same set of rules that apply to other political groups whose purpose is to spend money to influence federal elections. There should be no exception.

At a time when the public is calling for transparency and accountability, no longer can we tolerate a loophole that allows this type of money from the wealthy few to unfairly influence the political process.

If you voted for the Shays-Meehan/McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform bill in 2002—and 240 of us did—it would be wholly out of step to not support H.R. 513.

I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 513.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the efforts of my colleagues CHRIS SHAYS and MARTY MEEHAN to strengthen elections in this country. However, I oppose the measure they offer today because it seeks to address the wrong problem, and as a result, this proposal squelches participation by individuals and small donors in the electoral process. For that reason, and because there are First Amendment implications as well, I will vote against this measure.

On my first day as a Member of Congress in 1999, I joined the fight for campaign finance reform. I did so because we needed to curtail the influence of money in politics. The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act (BCRA) was critical to that effort because it eliminated corporate money and capped the size of donations that could be made to political candidates and political parties. These steps made it less likely that elected officials will be beholden to large donors instead of to their constituents.

The critical distinction between BCRA and the proposal before us today is that BCRA limited the amount of money that could go toward political candidates and parties. Today's proposal limits donations to organizations that advocate for a policy or a point of view. That is a radically different approach. Let's remember something: Elected officials are supposed to hear from their constituents at election time. A group of citizens speaking loudly through the collective action of a 527 is a democracy behaving as it should.

Organizations that attain 527 status under the Internal Revenue Code are dedicated to specific ideals and legislative objectives that they believe are best for America. Some 527s want more investment in education. Some want lower taxes. Some support the right to choose. Others oppose it. None of these organizations, however, may be dedicated to a specific person or party. They may not advocate for or against a specific candidate, nor coordinate their activities with a candidate's campaign. By definition, their involvement is the stuff of political discourse.

As a strong, early, and vocal supporter of the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act, I agree with the ban on raising and spending unregulated ''soft'' money by candidates and political parties. BCRA helps prevent elected Members of Congress from developing a ''second constituency,'' one that is different from their actual constituency, which is the people they represent. However, BCRA did not intend to prohibit robust debate of political ideals, values, and proposals for the betterment of our country. Doing so not only stifles political discourse, it runs afoul of the First Amendment right to speak freely. In February of 2004, I joined several of my colleagues in writing to the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) stating my view that while we need to break the link between unregulated contributions and federal officeholders, we need to protect, preserve, and even increase political involvement by ordinary citizens and independent associations.

If this bill passes, it's important to note who would be affected. According to the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet, 527 fundraising and spending increased fourfold between 2000 and 2004, while at the same time, voter turnout reached an unprecedented high of almost 126 million voters in 2004—15 million more than in 2000. This was largely a direct result of voter registration, education, and mobilization activities organized by 527s. Most importantly, although it has been widely reported that certain wealthy individuals made multi-million dollar contributions to 527s, the vast majority of 527 receipts were from individual donations of under $200. The liberal 527 organization ''America Coming Together,'' for example, raised $80 million in 2004, 80 percent of which was from donations of less than $200. Similarly, the conservative 527 organization ''Progress for America'' raised $45 million in 2004, 85 percent of which was from donations of less than $200.

These statistics are in stark contrast to much of the debate on this issue. Supporters of the proposal before us today have pointed to wealthy individuals who contributed large sums to 527s as evidence that 527s should be curtailed. My question is this: Even if this bill passes, what is to stop wealthy individuals from simply paying for the same television ads, mail pieces, and organizational efforts on their own, without 527s? If this bill passes, these same individuals will simply spend their money on their own. It is small donors—who, as I said already, are the majority of donors to 527s—who will be denied the benefit of collective action. Squelching 527s will not curb the involvement of wealthy individuals, it will simply make them towering figures on the playing field of public discourse. This is exactly the wrong outcome.

If we want to tighten issue advocacy, we should do so by enforcing the already existing requirement that 527s remain truly independent of political candidates and parties. Truly independent 527 organizations expand the political debate, increase the public's opportunity to hold elected officials accountable, and increase participation in the political process by ordinary Americans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 755, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the question of passage will be followed by 5-minute votes on House Resolution 692 and H.R. 3127.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 218, nays 209, not voting 6, as follows:

[Roll No. 88]

YEAS—218

Aderholt	Coble	Gutknecht
Akin	Cole (OK)	Hall
Alexander	Conaway	Harris
Bachus	Crenshaw	Hart
Baker	Cubin	Hastert
Baldwin	Culberson	Hastings (WA)
Barrett (SC)	Davis (KY)	Hayes
Barton (TX)	Davis, Jo Ann	Hayworth
Bass	Davis, Tom	Hefley
Beauprez	Deal (GA)	Herger
Biggert	DeLay	Hobson
Bilirakis	Dent	Hostettler
Bishop (UT)	Diaz-Balart, L.	Hulshof
Blackburn	Diaz-Balart, M.	Hunter
Blunt	Doolittle	Hyde
Boehlert	Drake	Inglis (SC)
Boehner	Dreier	Issa
Bonilla	Duncan	Jenkins
Bonner	Ehlers	Jindal
Bono	Emerson	Johnson (CT)
Boozman	English (PA)	Johnson (IL)
Boren	Everett	Johnson, Sam
Boustany	Feeney	Keller
Bradley (NH)	Ferguson	Kelly
Brady (TX)	Fitzpatrick (PA)	Kennedy (MN)
Brown (SC)	Foley	King (NY)
Brown-Waite, Ginny	Forbes	Kingston
	Fortenberry	Kirk
Burgess	Foxx	Kline
Burton (IN)	Frelinghuysen	Knollenberg
Buyer	Gallegly	Kolbe
Calvert	Gerlach	Kuhl (NY)
Camp (MI)	Gibbons	LaHood
Campbell (CA)	Gilchrest	Latham
Cannon	Gillmor	LaTourette
Cantor	Gingrey	Leach
Capito	Goode	Lewis (CA)
Carter	Goodlatte	Lewis (KY)
Case	Granger	Linder
Castle	Graves	LoBiondo
Chabot	Green (WI)	Lucas