

14203 E. Kentucky Road
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RECEIVED
FEDERAL ELECTION
COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT

Chairman Scott C. Thomas
Federal Election Commission
999 E. Street NW
Washington, DC 20463

Dear Chairman Thomas,

In 2002, the Federal Election Commission voted to exempt the internet from the provisions of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law. Last fall, US District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly overturned that decision. Currently, some members of your commission want to appeal that decision, but the vote is deadlocked and the appeal cannot currently proceed.

I am writing to you about this issue because I support the appeal. I happen to run a political website and blog on the Democratic side of the spectrum, and know there are many other individuals of all political persuasions who do the same. I do not communicate with the campaigns of individual candidates and therefore consider this to be an issue affecting my First Amendment rights.

Of particular concern is McCain-Feingold's press exemption. While this obviously extends to major newspapers, magazines, and broadcast stations, it is unclear what other media might be covered. As you well know, both sides in the 2004 election made a great deal of use of the internet. This includes a number of individual supporters of both parties who created political websites, blogs, and mailing lists, to discuss their favored candidates. Quite recently, a blogger was allowed a White House press pass, further blurring the lines between traditional and new media. CNN actually has daily reports on blogging activity.

Depending on the outcome of this matter in the courts and in the Congress, the day could come when

Individuals who get involved in politics over the internet face fines from the FEC for doing something so simple as posting a link to a candidate's website in one of their blog entries, even if the website is not coordinated in any way with the campaign.

This does not make sense to me. I can put a bumper sticker on my car, I can volunteer to offer rides to the polls, I can wear a political t-shirt, I can write a letter to the editor of my local paper, all because I support a particular candidate. If personal websites are not exempted from McCain-Feingold's provisions, however, via the press exemption or otherwise, I cannot put a link to my candidate's website on my own home page, I cannot offer my opinion on the opposing candidate's platform in my blog. I cannot forward a message from a candidate to my e-mail list.

I find these possibilities troubling, and an unacceptable limitation to free speech. If the FEC takes up this issue again, I ask you to side with the many individuals who are excited enough about the political process to invest their time in creating and maintaining personal websites and blogs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Ragon Buckley