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NEWSLETTER

96-688

April 19, 1979

Washington, D.C.

THE CURRENT MOVE IN CONGRESS is to extend public financing to congressional campaigns. Already individual taxpayers may decide to contribute to presidential campaigns by checking the appropriate box on their federal income tax return.

Since 1972, Americans have voted against public financing for presidential elections by indicating their preferences on their tax returns.

It is important to understand that this checkoff does not require an individual to add one dollar to his taxes. The taxpayer can check the box in favor of public financing displayed prominently on the front of the tax return and it costs him nothing except what is being paid in taxes.

Testimony before the House Administration Committee indicates that ten percent of those who favor public financing had their returns prepared by professionals, who checked the box favoring the contribution without the taxpayer's consultation. Only 29 percent voted for public financing last year.

As the renewed effort for public financing begins in Congress, I want it known at the outset that I oppose extending public financing to congressional campaigns.

The Federal Election Commission, created in 1974, now has 250 employees and operates on a budget of \$8.2 million, up from 160 employees and \$6.2 million in 1976.

The FEC has yet to finish auditing the 15 presidential candidates who ran in 1976. Proposed legislation to provide public financing of congressional elections would require audits of 10 percent of all general election candidates.

In 1978, there were 967 candidates. If all qualified for maximum public assistance, it would cost the American taxpayer \$58 million. And, if the required ten percent were audited with present FEC staffing, all of the audits wouldn't be completed until 1998.

Supporters of public financing argue that special interest groups exert an undue influence on congressional campaigns through political action committees as required by the 1974 law. But it's wrong to assume that these special interest groups contribute to the same candidates. They almost always have the effect of canceling each other out when it comes to campaign spending.

By its very nature, public financing detracts from the clout of an individual's

contribution by severely limiting the amount, dividing his money among all candidates, some he may not support, and taking away his right to contribute to candidates of his choice.

That, my friends, is a restriction on individual liberty best left out of federal law.

* * *

OUTSTANDING LAW ALUMNUS OF 1979. There were a number of features to my being given the St. Mary's University "Outstanding Law Alumnus Award" last week at the school's 23rd Annual Awards and Law Day Banquet in San Antonio.

Law School Dean Jim Castleberry, a former schoolmate of mine at St. Mary's, presented the award with nice comments.

There were local touches also. Jack L. Wolfe, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Wolfe of Edinburg, as President of the Student Bar Association, was master of ceremonies for the affair.

Another law school student who will graduate this year, Mike Duffey of Brownsville and his wife Thelma entertained us. My daughter Angela, came down from the University of Texas in Austin to accompany my wife and me to the event.

It was delightful to talk with Jack Wolfe and many other outstanding students from the 15th District. How eager and dynamic they are. It reminded me of my early years at St. Mary's, where I received a Bachelor of Law and Doctor of Jurisprudence.

* * *

APRIL IS CANCER CRUSADE MONTH. Every year at this time we join the American Cancer Society's efforts to raise money to find a cure to this dreaded disease. My hope is that this year's fundraising efforts will be the best ever, and respectfully ask all our friends and constituents to join the campaign and help.

On Saturday, April 28, McAllen Country Club is the site for the second time for the Rio Grande Valley Golf Classic to raise money to fight cancer. Ernie Williams of McAllen, who is heading up this charity affair, has told us that anybody who can play golf is welcome. Your participation is a contribution to this great cause. And bring some friends. Tee off time is at 8:15 A.M. and 1:15 P.M.

Last year, the golf tournament hosted 200 players and raised \$18,000. This was the largest cancer fundraising event in Texas. Let's make it bigger this year.

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VISITORS FROM HOME this week were Mr. and Mrs. Bob Sales and their children, Blake, Shannon and Wade, of Brownsville; and Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Funk and their two sons, Paige and Tommy, Jr., of Harlingen.