

**Prepared Statement of
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before the
Rules & Administration Committee
United States Senate**

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Mr. Chairman, members of this committee. I am pleased to be here today as one of the challenger candidates in our great democratic process of congressional elections. I find it interesting that seven members of the committee including your chairman were challenger candidates themselves when first elected to the Senate, and are thus well aware of the built-in advantages which all incumbents enjoy in our electoral process.

I am here today to discuss the importance of political parties in American politics. I have long believed that one of our country's greatest strengths is our solid two-party system. This has set us apart from the multi-party nations across the world where government rise and fall on whims and where instability is too often the norm.

And, it has been our political parties in America which have led the way for the historic and notable changes we have experienced in American society. My own party, the Republican party, was the driving force for the abolition of slavery; and the Democratic party led the way for safety nets for the dispossessed victims of the Great Depression.

I am here today to urge that we do nothing to decimate our great political parties in the name of "reform." Our parties are clearly the most challenger-friendly institutions in America, and the weakening of our parties' ability to help challenger candidates would only further the cause of incumbent protection and increase cynicism toward politics among the American people.

Challenger candidates in America face many hurdles when we enter a race against an incumbent. First, we must establish legitimacy and find a core group of supporters. The party nomination instantly accomplishes these two fundamental objectives.

The second hurdle is communicating our message to the voters. We all know that this is the most expensive part of a candidate's budget since challengers, in particular, have to rely primarily on paid media. Thus, when the Democratic or Republican party spends so-called soft money to educate voters and portray their positions on vital issues, those expenditures provide particular benefit to challenger candidates. With the exception of multi-millionaire candidates, most challengers cannot get their messages before the voters without help from their political parties.

Our national political parties are really lifelines for non-incumbent candidates. After all, both parties are looking to gain seats in Congress, and recognize the importance of promoting their challengers. If our parties are denied so-called soft money, both Republicans and Democrats will

be forced to use the hard money that typically flows to challengers for administrative activities such as salaries, building funds and voter registration.

We are all aware of the many advantages enjoyed by incumbents, and I will not enumerate them here. One worth mentioning, however, is the clear advantage enjoyed by incumbents regarding PAC contributions. There are a few ideological PACs open to non-incumbents. There are also PACs controlled by labor union bosses, but otherwise there few opportunities for challengers in the PAC community, which has clearly become risk adverse.

Both of our parties have a message for America, and their ability to present this message to us should not be diluted. It appears to me that those who would decrease the influence of our parties are trying to shoot the messengers rather than address the real abuses which have corrupted our system in the past.

Those who broke the current laws should not get off the hook by suddenly proclaiming themselves as reformers. There is no excuse for what happened in 1996, and removing so called soft money from our political process cannot whitewash the egregious activities of the last presidential campaign.

But, I am not here today to discuss the entire weighty issue of campaign finance reform. I do feel strongly that our political parties - Republican and Democrat - must be left whole if we are to further the cause of our political system and our representative government.

Thank you very much.