



CENTER FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

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January 29, 2007

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
241 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

VIA FACSIMILE

Dear Senator McCain:

Americans across the country -- particularly Conservatives -- are outraged at your announcement to introduce new legislation designed to once again muzzle political speech.

Specifically, in a January 26 article published in *The Politico*, a top aide in your office stated that you plan to sponsor legislation in the 110th Congress to “further clamp down on independent ‘527’ groups.” Moreover, your Chief of Staff, Mark Salter, boasted “Yes, it is McCain's bill,” presumably to make clear that you will continue your assault on the free speech and association rights of the American people.

Given your history of championing strict restrictions on political speech under the guise of so-called “clean elections,” most Americans will not be surprised by your eagerness to further silence their voices in the political process. We remain puzzled, however, about your continued refusal to directly answer the question of whether you plan to campaign for the 2008 Republican nomination within the presidential public financing system or abandon the limitations of that system in favor of more campaign dollars.

In a January 25 letter, the Center for Individual Freedom asked you to clearly and directly respond to that question. Moreover, we pointed out that as recently as the 2004 election cycle -- the most expensive presidential race in the nation's history -- you maintained “absolutely” your conviction favoring public campaign financing. Furthermore, in November 2003, you sponsored legislation to broaden the presidential public financing system, stating at the time that it was your hope “that a bill can be enacted to take effect for the 2008 presidential election.” And, you ultimately accepted public financing in your 2000 primary campaign.

Yet, as the race for presidential campaign dollars heats up, you continue to dodge the question. Indeed, the most direct answer you have given to date was during a November 19, 2006 interview with George Stephanopoulos on ABC's *This Week*, in which you said, “*I don't think – it depends, one, on what other candidates might do....*”

Senator McCain, as the Senate's chief "campaign finance reformer," you have an obligation to the American people to clearly state your intentions on this issue regardless of "what other candidates might do." Introducing legislation to further silence political speech is not a direct answer. In fact, if it is your intention to abandon the limitations of the presidential public financing system, such action suggests even greater hypocrisy on your part.

It has been widely reported that each of the major political parties' presidential candidates could spend as much as \$500 million through the 2008 primary and general elections. It also has been widely reported that you have assembled a presidential campaign team of "establishment operatives" and have begun raising large sums of money to support your certain bid for the Republican nomination. In fact, your activity in this regard caused columnist Robert Novak to recently label your presidential campaign "McCain, Inc."

With your stated intention to introduce legislation to "further clamp down on independent '527' groups" – ironically, organizations that you created through Congress's passage of the McCain-Feingold legislation – are Americans to assume that the only people you wish to speak during election time are the candidates themselves?

Senator McCain, we ask you again:

As a frontrunner for the 2008 Republican nomination for President, will you campaign within the presidential public financing system or is it your intention to abandon the limitations of that system in favor of more campaign dollars?

The American people, still wondering whether the "Straight-Talk Express" has taken a U-Turn in favor of your political aspirations, eagerly and respectfully await your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Mazzella
President
Center for Individual Freedom