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McCain Lauds Senate Passage of Landmark Campaign Finance Reform Bill *-- Seven-Year Fight to Enact Reform Ends with Senate Passage Today --*

Washington, DC – After fighting for seven years to enact meaningful campaign finance reform, U.S. Senator John McCain today lauded the Senate for passing the McCain-Feingold/Shays-Meehan bill (H.R. 2356) on a vote of 60 to 40. The reform measure was first introduced in 1995 by Senators McCain and Russ Feingold (D-WI) and will be sent to the President's desk for signature. Senator McCain's floor statement is as follows :

"Mr. President, I am grateful to my colleagues and the many, many people who have brought us to this point. This legislation will provide much needed reform of our federal election campaign laws. With the stroke of the President's pen, we will eliminate hundreds of millions of dollars of unregulated soft money that has caused Americans to question the integrity of their elected representatives. This is a good bill, it is a legally sound bill, and it is a fair bill that benefits neither party, but that profits our political system and that will, I hope, help to restore the public's faith in government.

"So much has been said about the substance of this bill, which has been hashed out, literally for years, and considered, reconsidered, and perfected on the Senate floor and in preparation for House passage. Therefore, I would simply like to take this opportunity to say thank you to a few of the people who have made this happen.

"First, I want to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my friend, Senator Feingold, for his unwavering

commitment to this cause. He has been a wise counsel and stalwart partner through these years and I will forever be proud to have my name associated with his on this issue.

"I want to thank the Majority Leader, Senator Daschle, for his steadfast support that enabled us to pass the McCain-Feingold bill last April, and to again bring it back this week for a final vote. I also want to thank the Republican Leader, Senator Lott, for his commitment to an open debate and for keeping the process fair. The majority and minority whips, Senators Reid and Nickles have my sincere thanks as well. Senator Dodd managed our side of the debate with his typical skill and good humor. I want to thank Senator Levin as well for his critical contributions to the compromises that attracted majority support for the bill in both houses of Congress.

"I am grateful to all of my colleagues, supporters and opponents alike, for their contributions to the bill and to the debate. I'd like to personally thank Senate Republican supporters, particularly Senators Thompson, Cochran, Snowe, and Collins, without whose guidance this would not have been possible. I am also grateful for the valued support of Senators Specter, Chafee, Fitzgerald, Lugar, and Domenici, who gave legitimacy to our claims of bipartisan cooperation.

"I am grateful again, as I am so often, to Senator Chuck Hagel. It takes a brave and committed soul to take it upon himself, as he did a few weeks ago, to attempt to facilitate a resolution to this measure between myself and the other supporters of this bill, and Senator McConnell. It is in large part due to his efforts that we have that resolution today.

"Senate passage of a bill, of course, is only half, or less than half really, of the legislative battle, and were it not for the untiring work of Congressmen Chris Shays and Martin Meehan, the House sponsors of this legislation, we would not be here today. I will always hold them in the highest regard for their tenacious, unrelenting commitment to our shared goal. House Minority Leader Gephardt worked many long hours to hold the support of the vast majority of his caucus, and I am greatly indebted to him. I salute also, the Members who signed the discharge petition that forced House consideration of this bill, and the brave Republicans in particular, who voted for its passage.

"As I told my colleague, Senator McConnell, a few weeks ago, I won't miss our annual contests on this issue. No one in his right mind could want to continue against so formidable a foe. I can only hope, however, that, should I ever find myself again in a pitched legislative battle, (shy as I am, of entering into them), that my opponent is as principled as Senator Mitch McConnell. It has been a worthy effort by all involved and I will always appreciate the dedication shown by all of my colleagues in their efforts to champion their beliefs.

"I am compelled to mention a few of indispensable supporters -- in particular, I would like to thank Fred Wertheimer of Democracy 21, all the good, dedicated folks at Common Cause -- Scott Harshbarger, Meredith McGeehee, Matt Keller and Don Simon, Jerry Kolberg's Campaign for America, and the Committee for Economic Development. I am thankful also, to Trevor Potter, a former FEC Commissioner, for his insight and sound practical advice, and to Rick Davis, who kept me focused on the big picture and provided invaluable strategic advice.

"I cannot begin to name the many thousands of people not in this Chamber, who have fought so hard and so long, and who gathered under the umbrella of a group called Americans for Reform. I also want to mention the efforts by AARP; the League of Women Voters; Public Citizen; a broad coalition of religious organizations; and Carla Eudy and the staff and supporters of Straight Talk America, for their tireless contributions to this effort, and the honor of their friendship. Thanks also to my friend John Weaver, for his help and guidance.

"Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print in the record a list of the staffers of the Senators who contributed significantly to this legislative effort.

"In particular, I want to thank Mary Murphy and Bob Schiff of Senator Feingold's staff for all of their work on this issue over the years. Let me also express my heartfelt gratitude to my former staffer, Mark Buse, who recently left the Hill after working by my side on this issue for many years. This would not have been possible without him. Let me thank as well, Mark's successor as Republican staff director on the Commerce Committee, Jeane Bumpus, who is an incredibly short period of time, became expert on the many issues involved in this legislation, and was an invaluable support to me.

"Mr. President, the proponents of this legislation have had, and continue to have, one purpose: to enact fair, bipartisan, campaign finance reform that seeks no special advantage for one party or another. Once we complete the Senate debate and vote on final passage, it will be up to the President to take the action that his spokesmen and advisors have led us to believe he will take -- to sign the bill into law. It is my hope that he will deem it appropriate to do this.

"The supporters of campaign finance reform have differences about what constitutes ideal reform, but we have subordinated those differences to the common good. We all recognized one very simple truth: that campaign contributions from a single source that run to the hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars are not healthy to a democracy. Is that not self-evident? It is to the American people, Mr. President. It is to the people.

"The reforms I believe we are about to pass will not cure public cynicism about politics. Nor will it completely free politics from influence peddling or the appearance of it. But I believe it might cause many Americans who are at present quite disaffected from the practices and institutions of our democracy to begin to see that their elected representatives value their reputations more than their incumbency. And maybe that recognition will cause them to exercise their franchise more faithfully, to identify more closely with political parties, to raise their expectations for the work we do. Maybe it will even encourage more Americans to seek public office, not for the privileges bestowed on election winners, but for the honor of serving a great nation. If by today's vote we make even small progress in this direction, I think we have rendered good service to our country, and I am proud of it.

" I respectfully ask my colleagues for their votes in support of final passage of this bill."

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