

March 27, 2002

NRA First to File Constitutional Challenge to Campaign Finance Law

**JOINT STATEMENT BY WAYNE LAPIERRE , EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA and JAMES JAY BAKER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NRA'S INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

(Washington, D.C.) --"Early this morning, President Bush signed into law the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act ("BCRA"). When the federal courthouse opened for business today, NRA was there – we have filed suit to invalidate this unconstitutional infringement on the First Amendment rights of the NRA and our four million members nationwide.

We are proud to be the first plaintiff to formally ask the federal court to invalidate these new limits on the political speech of ordinary citizens because we believe that this law cannot be allowed to stand – not even for a moment.

Sen. Paul Wellstone said on the floor of the United States Senate during the campaign finance debate that it was his intention to silence the NRA. As a direct and intentional target of this law, NRA has no choice but to protect our right to be heard.

NRA has been mentioned by name – but the authors of this law have delivered a clear and straightforward message not only to NRA but to all American citizens. That message is this: 'Keep your mouths shut.' 'Stay out of *our* political debates.' 'Be quiet.'

Our response is this: the First Amendment *protects* us from such directives from the government. The First Amendment does not *allow* Congress to make laws which deny us the right to speak out on issues, the right of our members to associate together on public policy issues and the right to petition our government for redress of grievances. That is what this lawsuit is about.

Through this law Congress has essentially granted speech licenses to giant corporate conglomerates such as Viacom, Disney Corporation and General Electric Company by allowing those corporations *unlimited* rights to spend money talking about issues and candidates, while silencing the voices of ordinary citizens and citizens groups such as NRA.

Why should corporations such as these media conglomerates, all of which own multiple non-news business enterprises and spend millions of dollars lobbying Congress—why should those corporations be allowed to spend whatever they wish, whenever they wish, saying whatever they wish regarding any issue or candidate – when a non-profit citizens organizations such as ours is prohibited from even *responding* via the broadcast media?

The law imposes severe civil and criminal penalties on citizens who have the audacity to speak out on issues of concern – and we do *not* believe that the Constitution of the United States of America and the U.S. Supreme Court can possibly allow such a result."

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Mitchell, Foley & Lardner, (202) 295-4081. Both are from Washington, D.C. The docket # for NRA v. FEC is 02-581.