

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS
March 2, 1979

CAMPAIGN FINANCING LEGISLATION

SINGLE ISSUE GROUPS IMPACT CAMPAIGN FINANCING AS MUCH AS THEY AFFECT THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. LAST YEAR, 1911 INDEPENDENT, NON-PARTY GROUPS CONTRIBUTED \$76 MILLION TO CAMPAIGNS. SINGLE ISSUE GROUPS FUND MANY OF THE INCREASING NUMBER OF POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES WHICH HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INFLATED CAMPAIGN COFFERS IN RECENT YEARS.

LOOK AT HOW SPENDING HAS SKYROCKETED:

* IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT IN 1978, THE AVERAGE SENATE SEAT COST MORE THAN \$1 MILLION TO WIN, COMPARED TO \$550,000 IN 1974, THE LAST NON-PRESIDENTIAL YEAR. HOUSE RACES JUMPED FROM ABOUT \$72,000 IN 1976 TO MORE THAN \$100,000 IN 1978, WHETHER THE CANDIDATE WON OR LOST.

LOOK AT HOW PACS HAVE INCREASED:

* DURING THE POLITICAL YEAR OF 1977-1978, THE NUMBER OF UNIONS, CORPORATIONS, TRADE ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER GROUPS WITH POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES TRIPLED IN NUMBER SINCE 1974 RISING TO 1,700. THEIR DONATIONS HAVE RISEN ALMOST THREEFOLD TO APPROXIMATELY \$35 MILLION LAST YEAR.

* IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT ONE DOLLAR OUT OF EVERY SIX RECEIVED BY THE 20 NEW SENATORS CAME FROM SPECIAL INTERESTS.

SUCH SPENDING BY CANDIDATES ENDANGERS OUR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. A DEMOCRACY CANNOT SURVIVE IF CANDIDATES HAVE TO "BUY" THEIR SEATS OR DEPEND ON SPECIAL INTEREST OR SINGLE INTEREST GROUPS TO WIN.

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TO COUNTER THIS TREND, I AM INTRODUCING A BILL WHICH PROVIDES FOR PUBLIC FINANCING OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS. THE CENTRAL PROVISIONS OF THE BILL ARE:

*PUBLIC FINANCING OF PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTIONS FOR HOUSE AND SENATE. BOTH PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTIONS MUST BE COVERED BY A PUBLIC FINANCING BILL TO REDUCE THE HIGH COST OF CAMPAIGNS.

*CANDIDATES WILL RECEIVE MATCHING PUBLIC FUNDS FOR PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS OF \$100 OR LESS. THIS WILL COVER UP TO 50 PERCENT OF MANDATED SPENDING LIMITS. THIS WILL ENCOURAGE CANDIDATES TO SEEK CONTRIBUTIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS RATHER THAN POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES.

*CANDIDATES WILL RECEIVE PUBLIC FUNDS ONLY WHEN FOLLOWING THE SPENDING LIMITS PROVIDED BY THE ACT. IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS, HOUSE CANDIDATES ARE LIMITED TO EXPENDITURES OF \$150,000; SENATE CANDIDATES ARE LIMITED TO \$250,000 PLUS TEN CENTS PER ELIGIBLE VOTER. IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS, THESE AMOUNTS ARE REDUCED BY HALF. CANDIDATES RECEIVING PUBLIC FUNDS MAY ONLY SPEND \$25,000 FROM PERSONAL FUNDS.

*THE SPENDING LIMIT OF POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES IS REDUCED FROM \$5,000 TO \$3,000.

IN ADDITION TO MY OWN BILL, WHICH I WILL INTRODUCE SOON, I AM CO-SPONSORING PUBLIC FINANCING LEGISLATION WITH SENATORS KENNEDY, CRANSTON, MATHIAS, AND STAFFORD. I COMMEND THESE SENATORS FOR THEIR PERSISTENT INTEREST AND HARD WORK IN PUSHING FOR SUCH REFORMS.

IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE CONTROL THE FUNDS SPENT ON CAMPAIGNS. THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND THE VERY FUNCTION OF THE CONGRESS DEPENDS ON IT.

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