

Washington, D.C. – Today, Representative David Price (NC-04), the author of [legislation](#) to "mend, not end" the presidential campaign public financing system, spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives, urging his colleagues to oppose the third GOP effort this year to abolish the program. Rep. Price called on House Republicans to get to work on the American people's priorities—economic growth and job creation—instead of focusing on a bill that would allow more special interest and corporate money to pour into presidential elections.

House Republicans brought the bill forward as a deficit reduction measure, using savings from repealing the campaign public financing system to pay for [a bill undermining the rights of workers](#) ; an effort Rep. Price called "the height of cynicism." The text of Rep. Price's remarks is below.

Watch Rep. Price's Remarks on YouTube

"Mr. Speaker, I rise for the third time this year to oppose a measure that would summarily repeal our system of public funding for presidential elections.

"Once again, the House majority seems intent on dismantling the few remaining safeguards we have left against the influence of special interests in politics, following the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling. The fact that they are ostensibly bringing this bill forward as a deficit reduction measure, in order to pay for a bill to undermine workers' rights, is the height of cynicism.

"The bill before us today would destroy one of the most successful examples reform that followed the Watergate scandal. Dare we forget what that scandal was about? The Committee to Re-elect the President, fueled by huge quantities of corporate cash, paying for criminal acts and otherwise subverting the American electoral system.

"The hallmark of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974, enacted at a time when public confidence in the government was dangerously low, was our voluntary program of public financing for presidential elections. To this day, this innovative reform stands as one of the greatest steps we have taken to bring transparency and accountability to our electoral system.

"And it has worked remarkably well -- being utilized in the general election by every Republican and Democratic presidential nominee from 1976 through 2004 and by John McCain in 2008 -- although in recent years the need for modernization has become evident.

"Perhaps the best example of this program's success is President Ronald Reagan, who participated in the presidential public financing system in all three of his presidential campaigns -- in 1976, 1980 and 1984.

"The Reagan case illustrates the positive effects public financing has had in both parties, at both the primary and general election stages. It illuminates the way in which the system benefits candidates who challenge the party's establishment. It also highlights the system's focus on small donations, rather than big bucks from large contributors. Note that this is no free ride, no willy nilly spending program: candidates must seek the support of thousands of small donors during the primary to prove their viability, and only then do they receive matching public funds.

"Today one could wish -- in light of the positive history of this program and prior Republican support -- for a bipartisan effort to repair the system and restore its effectiveness. I don't know of any policy challenge that exemplifies the maxim, 'mend it; don't end it' better than this one.

"Earlier this year, Congressman Van Hollen and I reintroduced a bill that would do just that. It would modernize the presidential public financing system and again make it an attractive and viable option for presidential candidates. Our bill would bring available funds into line with the increased cost of campaigns, adjust the program to the front-loaded primary calendar, and enhance the role of small donors. The bill has been carefully designed and deserves deliberation and debate.

"Instead, we are faced with yet another Republican attempt to open the floodgates for corporate cash and special-interest influence to pour into our political system.

"With confidence in government at rock bottom and perceptions of government corruption through the roof, why is the majority trying to return us to the dark days of Watergate? Let's instead restore and improve our public financing system and move on to real solutions to put our nation's fiscal house in order.

"Let's not use valuable floor time to pass a bill that has NO chance of becoming law. The American people want us to get to work on important measures to revive the struggling economy and put people back to work.

"I urge the majority to heed their call and get to work on passing the remaining appropriations bills, fixing the Medicare physician reimbursement, extending the payroll tax cut and unemployment benefits, patching the AMT, and reauthorizing the FAA in time for families' holiday travel.

"But I'm afraid their pleas are falling on deaf ears. We need to get to work on the people's business, not on this flawed bill that threatens to allow big money to play an even larger role in our politics."

Releated Information

The New York Times: (Editorial) Watergate? Whatever Was That?

November 30, 2011

House Republicans will surely invoke their all-purpose rationale — deficit savings — as they try on Thursday to repeal the public financing option for presidential campaigns. This is the highly effective reform enacted after the Watergate scandal. It is revealing that just as a new era of unbridled corporate and special-interest money engulfs the 2012 elections, Republicans are determined to kill off the public financing option.

For decades, every major candidate opted for the subsidies and the spending limits until Congress failed to increase the federal match to account for campaign inflation. George W. Bush opted out for the primary fight in his 2000 campaign, seeking a larger war chest from private donors. Barack Obama dropped it for both the primary and general elections. He vowed to fix a "broken" system — not now as he enjoys unprecedented private financing.

The cynicism at work in the House is underlined by the fact that even as Republican leaders target the public option, the Republican Party has quietly requested and received a tidy \$17.7 million in public money to pay for its presidential convention next year (while offering no righteous outcries that it be offset by budget cutbacks).

Democratic Party leaders are also taking convention money, but at least House Democrats are fighting to repair, not bury, the public option. A strong measure to update donation formulas and campaign subsidies has been submitted by **Representatives David Price of North Carolina and Chris Van Hollen of Maryland**. It has the added virtue of continuing the Election Assistance Commission, set up after the 2000 presidential vote-count crisis to help upgrade state and local voting systems.

Republicans want to shut that down, too, in the name of mission accomplished. Not hardly. More than ever, voters need a robust public presidential option and a continuing Election Assistance Commission.

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