

Senate Rules Committee Sets \$100,000 Campaign Gift Limit

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The Senate Rules Committee tentatively approved yesterday a limit of \$100,000 on total annual contributions by any individual to Presidential, Senate and House campaigns.

The limit for married couples would be double that.

The same ceilings would apply to independent and special-interest committees, such as those backed by business, labor and professional groups. However, nothing in a draft reform bill would limit the number of such committees.

Meeting in a closed mark-up session, the Rules Committee also discarded a previously proposed \$3,000 restriction on an individual's annual gifts to any presidential or congressional candidate in either a primary or general election.

In its place, the committee substituted a \$15,000 limit for a presidential candidate and \$5,000 for a House or Senate candidate.

The same limit would apply for a special interest committee. A couple, of course, could give twice as much.

If these limits are incorporated in the reform bill Senate Rules expects to report in final form next week, a couple could give a presidential candidate as much as \$60,000 in a single year. They also give \$20,000 to each of seven candidates for the House and Sen-

ate without exceeding the combined limit of \$200,000.

A spokesman for the citizens' lobby Common Cause said the group will fight to reduce the over-all ceiling to \$25,000 a year for an individual or a family, as well as for special-interest committees.

Common Cause also endorses more detailed proposals in a House bill with more than 60 sponsors, which would set limits of \$2,500 for a presidential candidate and \$1,000 for any one congressional candidate for primary and general elections together.

The Common Cause spokesman acknowledged that the ceilings tentatively approved by Senate Rules effectively curbs super-contributors such as W. Clement Stone, the Chicago insurance tycoon who gave more than \$2 million to President Nixon's re-election drive.

But, the spokesman told reporters, the limits are too high and "not meaningful," especially for congressional and senatorial candidates.

Sources said that special-interest committees, some on opposite sides of political issues, lobbied against the original proposed \$3,000 contribution limit.

In another action, the committee rejected a proposed ban on cash contributions, a hallmark of campaign financing episodes in the Watergate scandal.

It was learned that the re-

jection was based on a controversial claim that it would be unconstitutional to ban cash gifts while accepting checks. At least one senator plans to try to revive the ban when the committee meets to complete action on the bill, probably next Wednesday.

The Senate Commerce Committee, which reported the bill in its original form, had set next Friday as a deadline for action by Senate Rules. However, Rules Chairman Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.) is expected to seek a one-week extension.

In other tentative actions yesterday, Senate Rules retained a proposed ban on contributions by aliens and stiffened existing penalties for election-law violations.

Other major provisions of the draft bill include an independent elections commission, limits on expenditures, centralized financial accountability, and an inducement to broadcasters to grant free time to federal candidates.