

Senate Starts Debate Today On Campaign Spending Bill

By Peter Braestrup

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The Senate begins debate today on the first major campaign spending bill since the Watergate hearings began—with no great groundswell of congressional support.

The bill, which would be enacted as the "Federal Election Campaign Act of 1973," would set up a bipartisan seven-man commission to enforce new curbs on spending, tighten some fund reporting procedures and ban straight cash donations of more than \$100.

It does not attempt to provide federal takeover of campaign financing or free radio and television time to candidates—issues due to come up in separate bills after Congress' August recess.

Both reformers and their foes have found plenty of faults in the Senate bill, which came out of Sen. Howard Cannon's (D-Nev.) Committee on Rules and Administration on July 11.

The Cannon panel's No. 2 Democrat, Sen. Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, described the bill as an "earnest effort" to bar a repetition of such excesses in funding of the 1972 presidential campaign as the Mexican "laundering" of cash donations and evasion of the 1971 law now on the books.

Noting several loopholes in the proposed law, however, Pell added that "it would be a disservice" to the public to argue that the bill would "completely eliminate" campaign financing abuses.

Sen. Marlow Cook (R-Ky.) complained that the bill sets no limit on the number of special interest committees that can be created raise money for a candidate or on how much money they can raise.

The bill would also repeal a section of the 1971 law that prohibits unions or companies doing business with the government from setting up voluntary political contribution programs—a change opposed by common cause but backed by the AFL-CIO and corporations alike.

The new bill would also eliminate a 1971 requirement—designed to spotlight conflicts of interest that the occupations of campaign donors be reported.

Limits under the new Senate bill are set for campaign outlays by candidates for Congress and the presidency; but the 1971 law's ceiling on a candidate's expenditures for media advertising would be repealed.

Limits are also set for individual donations—up to \$5,000 per congressional candidate

and \$15,000 for a presidential candidate in each primary or general election but in no case to exceed \$100,000 per calendar year to all candidates and all fund-raising committees.

The bill would repeal the "equal time" provisions of federal law for candidates for all federal offices. These provisions now require broadcasters to give the same amount of free time to all major or minor party candidates for office.

Last week, the Los Angeles Times reported, staff members of 25 reform-minded senators met to coordinate strategy for strengthening the Rules Committee bill by amendment on the floor this week. Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) is expected to lead the floor fight, especially for tighter curbs or fund-raising and spending by individual campaign committees.

Sens. Adlai E. Stevenson III (D-Ill.) and Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.) have announced they will seek to tighten some of the proposed bill's requirements and put a lower ceiling on each Presidential candidate's outlays—which could go up to \$60 million in 1976 under the Rules Committee bill.

Said Stevenson: "Our dan-

ger today is not too much but too little reform."

The White House, by all accounts, has been ambivalent toward congressional moves at campaign reform, having submitted Mr. Nixon's own plan in May for a reform study commission.

But Sen. Hugh Scott (R-Pa.); the Senate GOP leader, said the Senate should back the Cannon panel's bill, especially the provision for an independent watchdog commission. If the bill passes, Scott said, "I will urge the President to approve it."

In the House, as Rep. John Anderson (R-Ill.) chairman of the House GOP Conference noted, Rep. Wayne Hays (D-Ohio), powerful chairman of the House Administration Committee, "sits astride" the legislative path to revision of campaign spending laws.

There has been no push by House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) to move a counterpart to the Senate bill. By all accounts, Hays favors a spending limit but is opposed to the watchdog commission; he does not plan to hold hearings on various House reform proposals until September.



SEN. CLAIBORNE PELL
... an "earnest effort"

Yesterday, Common Cause chairman John Gardner, in an interview with the Associated Press, noted that the Watergate scandal had given his self-styled citizens lobby a new lease on life.

But, he said, while the Watergate revelations have been unfolding for months, "Congress has shown virtually no leadership in bringing the kind of remedies that would prevent a recurrence of Watergate. It's a very odd kind of schizophrenia."