

SENATE DEBATES CAMPAIGN FUND

Bill for Financing by Public

Faces Many Obstacles

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WASHINGTON, March 26 —

Despite the double threat of a filibuster and a Presidential veto, the Senate began today what is expected to be a protracted debate over a major election reform bill that would finance the 1976 Presidential and Congressional campaigns with public funds.

The opening round of speeches was a reply of one last December with Senator James B. Allen, an Alabama Democrat who blocked a similar proposal then with a successful filibuster, watching every move of the bill's supporters and waiting to offer a stack of amendments.

"I think it will be discussed at length," the soft-spoken Mr. Allen said of the bill.

"I hear there's going to be a filibuster of sorts," the majority leader, Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, told reporters. He declined to say when an attempt would be made to shut off debate.

Opposition in House

In December the Senate was unable to muster a two-thirds vote to close debate on the public financing proposal, which a majority of the Senate had voted to attach to a bill extending the Federal debt ceiling.

There appeared to be no as-

surances that the Senate could shut off debate this time. Even if the Senate approved the bill, it faces opposition in the House, where many members are reluctant to make public campaign funds available to their opponents.

In addition, President Nixon has denounced public financing of campaigns as "a raid on the public treasury" and is expected to veto any such bill.

"We may not eradicate all future Watergates, but certainly we will discourage the perpetuation of a climate in which power is abused by the clever at the expense of the unwary," Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, told the Senate in urging passage of the measure.

However, two Republican members of the Senate Watergate committee — Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee and Lowell P. Weicker Jr. of Connecticut — said in separate statements that public financing

was not a proper solution to campaign abuses brought to light in the Watergate investigations.

Instead, Mr. Baker proposed full tax credits for political contributions of up to \$50 by an individual and \$100 for a couple, and Mr. Weicker proposed shortening Federal election campaigns to 60 days.

The campaign-financing bill, which was approved, 7 to 1, by the Senate Rules Committee Feb. 6, would create a seven-member commission to administer the funds, which would be raised by doubling the current checkoff on Federal income tax returns to \$2 for an individual and to \$4 for a couple.

Automatic Provision

The checkoff would be automatic unless a taxpayer indicated that he did not want his tax dollars designed for the fund, and Congress would be authorized to make up any deficits in the fund if the check-

off did not produce enough revenue.

Under the bill, individual contributions could not exceed \$3,000 each to a candidate in a primary and a general election and the following overall campaign spending limits would be set:

For general elections, 15 cents per eligible voter, or about \$24-million for President; 15 cents per voter or \$175,000, whichever is greater, for the Senate, and 15 cents per voter or \$90,000, whichever is greater, for the House.

For primary elections, the spending limits would be 20 cents per voter in a given state and 10 cents per vote nationwide, or about \$16-million in all primaries for President; 10 cents per voter or \$125,000, whichever is greater, for the Senate, and 10 cents per voter or \$90,000, whichever is greater, for the House.