

Donation Limit Set At \$3,000

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The Senate, moving to limit what senators called "the corrupting and pervasive influence of big money" on federal elections, voted 54 to 39 yesterday to clamp a \$3,000 lid on the amount an individual can contribute to any presidential or congressional candidate's election campaign.

The action was the first major vote on a comprehensive campaign reform bill seeking to block multi-millionaires and wealthy families from "buying" political influence by massive contributions to candidates.

Under the amendment, sponsored by Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Texas), the \$3,000 limit would apply separately to primaries, runoff and general elections, so an individual could actually give up to \$9,000 to one candidate in three installments. At present, there is no limit.

The bill as reported to the floor contained a \$5,000 limit for congressional candidates and \$15,000 limit for presidential candidates, separately applicable to the primary, runoff and general election.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), asserting this was still too high, proposed to slash the committee figures down to \$100 for both races. However, Bentsen, declaring that Proxmire's proposal was too low and could never clear Congress, countered with the \$3,000 limit. This was accepted on a 72 to 21 preliminary vote and then nailed down on the key 54 to 39 confirming vote.

While limiting any person to \$3,000 in contributions to any one candidate, the Bentsen amendment doesn't bar the donor from contributing that amount to several candidates and to

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national or state party committees. However, another provision of the bill says that an individual and his family are barred from contributing more than \$100,000 in the aggregate to all candidates and political committees.

A coalition including the United Auto Workers, AFL-CIO, National Committee for an Effective Congress, Common Cause, Ralph Nader's Congress Watch and the Center for Public Financing of Elections is supporting an even more stringent limit than Bentsen's. Sponsored by Sen. Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.), it would restrict contributions by an individual to \$1,000 for primary, runoff and general elections combined, and total family contributions to \$15,000 (instead of \$100,000). Spokesmen for the coalition said they were

pleased with Bentsen's reduction to \$3,000, but still want the \$1,000 Hart amendment which also closes what they consider other loopholes.

In another vote yesterday, the Senate adopted, 80 to 2, an amendment by Sen. Walter Mondale (D-Minn.) restoring a provision of existing law, which the rules committee sought to drop, requiring any contributor of over \$100 to be identified by occupation and place of business, as well as name and address, in reports filed with the federal government.

Also approved, by voice vote, was an amendment by Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.) designed to curb the activities of organizations like the Committee for the Re-election of the President. It requires each party national committee to approve any expenditure by anyone, on

behalf of a candidate, if it exceeds \$1,000.

Killed, 53 to 40, was a proposal for public financing of House and Senate campaigns, sponsored by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and minority leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), who said financing by the Treasury would free candidates from obligations to well-heeled contributors. Their proposal gave major-party candidates a minimum of \$90,000 for a House race and \$175,000 for a Senate race or 20 cents for each person of voting age, whichever is greater. (In a state with 5 million persons of voting age, the candidate would get \$1 million.) Despite this defeat, sponsors of public financing proposals will make a major push for them in the fall.

A provision repealing the radio-TV "equal time" requirement for congressional races (as well as

presidential) stayed in the bill, on a 50 to 43 vote.

The commerce communications subcommittee chairman, John Pastore (D-R.I.), said he favors repeal for congressional as well as presidential races, to allow stations to broadcast debates between major candidates without having to give equal time to minor candidates. But he said the House will never accept such a repeal for House races. (Incumbent House members think it will hurt them to have to debate challengers.) Pastore lost, however, in an attempt to repeal the equal-time requirement for presidential races only.

On the Bentsen \$3,000 amendment, Maryland Republicans J. Glenn Beall and Charles McC. Mathias and Virginia Republican William L. Scott voted yes. Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr. (Ind.-Va.) voted no.