

voting materials to be used in a Federal election, without having to satisfy any requirement relating to a petition under subsection (a), if that or another individual, as a candidate of that political party, body, or group, received one percent of the votes cast in the most recent general Federal election for President or Senator in the State.

(c) SAVINGS PROVISION.—Subsections (a) and (b) shall not apply with respect to any State that provides by law for greater ballot access rights than the ballot access rights provided for under such subsections.

SEC. ___03. RULEMAKING.

The Attorney General shall make rules to carry out this title.

SEC. ___04. GENERAL DEFINITIONS.

As used in this title—

(1) the term “Federal election” means a general or special election for the office of—

(A) President or Vice President;
(B) Senator; or
(C) Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress;

(2) the term “State” means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and any other territory or possession of the United States;

(3) the term “individual” means an individual who has the qualifications required by law of a person who holds the office for which such individual seeks to be a candidate;

(4) the term “petition” includes a petition which conforms to section ___02(a)(1) and upon which signers’ addresses and/or printed names are required to be placed;

(5) the term “signer” means a person whose signature appears on a petition and who can be identified as a person qualified to vote for an individual for whom the petition is circulated, and includes a person who requests another to sign a petition on his or her behalf at the time when, and at the place where, the request is made;

(6) the term “signature” includes the incomplete name of a signer, the name of a signer containing abbreviations such as first or middle initial, and the name of a signer preceded or followed by titles such as “Mr.,” “Ms.,” “Dr.,” “Jr.,” or “III”; and

(7) the term “address” means the address which a signer uses for purposes of registration and voting.

(Participation by presidential candidates in debates with candidates with broad-based support)

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of Friday, July 17, 1998, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes in support of his amendment.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, point of order.

THE CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, I believe this is a perfecting amendment, it is not in the nature of a substitute, and that has been cleared in the Committee on Rules.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. The Clerk designated it as an amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, both amendments that I have should be perfecting amendments, and if permissible, I ask unanimous consent that they both be accepted as such.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. It is an amendment to the amendment in the

nature of a substitute. The gentleman is amending the Shays-Meehan amendment in the nature of a substitute as permitted by the rules.

Mr. PAUL. I thank the Chair for the clarification.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment is very simple. It is an amendment that deals with equity and fairness, so I would expect essentially no opposition to this.

It simply lowers and standardizes the signature requirements and the time required to get signatures to get a Federal candidate on the ballot. There are very many unfair rules and regulations by the States that make it virtually impossible for many candidates to get on the ballot.

Mr. Chairman, I want to make 4 points about the amendment. First, it is constitutional to do this. Article I, section 4, explicitly authorizes the U.S. Congress to, “At any time by law make or alter such regulations regarding the manner of holding elections.” This is the authority that was used for the Voters Rights Act of 1965.

The second point I would like to make is an issue of fairness. Because of the excess petition requirements put on by so many States and the short period of time required, many individuals are excluded from the ballot, and for this reason, this should be corrected. There are some States, take, for instance, Georgia, wrote a law in 1943. There has not been one minor party candidate on the ballot since 1943, because it cannot meet the requirements. This is unfair. This amendment would correct this.

Number 3, the third point. In contrast to some who would criticize an amendment like this by saying that there would be overcrowding on the ballot, there have been statistical studies made of States where the number of requirements, of signature requirements are very low, and the time very generous. Instead of overcrowding, they have an average of 3.3 candidates per ballot.

Now, this is very important also because it increases interest and increases turnout. Today, turnout has gone down every year in the last 20 or 30 years, there has been a steady decline in interest. This amendment would increase the interest and increase the turnout.

The fourth point that I would like to make is that the setup and the situation we have now is so unfair, many are concerned about how money is influencing the elections. But in this case, rules and regulations are affecting minor candidates by pushing up the cost of the election, where they cannot afford the money to even get on the ballot, so it is very unfair in a negative sense that the major parties penalize any challengers. And the correction would come here by equalizing this, making it more fair, and I would expect, I think, just everybody to agree

that this is an amendment of fairness and equity and should be accepted.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Chairman, I request the time in opposition to the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT).

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment, but the real purpose is to focus my remarks on the need for the Shays-Meehan substitute rather than the specifics of this particular amendment, which are not the real issue.

The reason we need Shays-Meehan is quite simple and quite stark. The legitimacy of the American political process is being undermined.

I do not use these words lightly or as a mere rhetorical flourish. We can try to convince ourselves that all is well, salving ourselves with polls showing the approval for Congress is relatively high. Ironically, some argue that all is well because money is flowing into our campaign covers. This is like saying that a cancer patient is in better shape than someone without cancer, because that person might have more cells.

But in any event, a closer look tells a less rosy story. Polls show that many Americans do not know the first thing about Congress, the names of their representatives, which party is in control, and so forth. Discussions with average Americans uncover a deep cynicism about the political process; and looking at what in other circumstances we call the only poll that truly counts, Americans are simply abandoning the election booth.

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Turnout is at an alltime low. Alienation from the political system is at an historical high. There could be no greater danger in a democracy. We are in the midst of a silent crisis.

Campaign finance reform does not rank high as a concern in polls simply because no one believes we can truly do it. They believe we are hapless and that the situation is hopeless, so they just continue to turn away. This is as corrosive a disease for the body politic as can be imagined. It is no less serious because the symptoms do not appear fully until it is too late to fashion a cure. So I congratulate the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) for designing a cure while there is still time.

Some people have said that the side effects of this cure are so severe that we should just let the disease take its course, but that is simply wrong. The cure is as mild as sunshine, ensuring that everyone can see who is spending money to influence the political system. Shays-Meehan is, quite literally, the very least we can do.

Let us look at some of the concerns opponents of this bill raise. They say that, like previous efforts at reform, it