

## **Bill would trample on First Amendment rights**

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### **Abstract:**

In 20th century America effective political speech requires access to the mass media, which means spending money. This phony reform bill would have made a mockery of the First Amendment prohibition against Congress passing laws abridging freedom of speech by strictly regulating any advertising that advocates the election or defeat of a candidate within 60 days of an election. Doesn't anyone realize that our constitutional rights cannot be subject to bureaucratic whim?

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### **Full Text:**

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I'm sick of seeing the McCain-Feingold bill being described as a "reform" with all of the positive connotations associated with that word. The reality is that McCain-Feingold would get the government in the business of regulating freedom of speech in violation of our most basic civil liberty.

In 20th century America effective political speech requires access to the mass media, which means spending money. This phony reform bill would have made a mockery of the First Amendment prohibition against Congress passing laws abridging freedom of speech by strictly regulating any advertising that advocates the election or defeat of a candidate within 60 days of an election. Doesn't anyone realize that our constitutional rights cannot be subject to bureaucratic whim?

Newspapers such as the Globe that support such phony reforms would rightly be the first to protest if Congress attempted to regulate how much they could spend on newsprint or reporters. Yet newspapers support such restrictions on other people's right to engage in political speech. If McCain-Feingold is resurrected and eventually enacted, the big-media stranglehold on political discourse will become even tighter, since reporters will be one of the few unregulated means of getting political views to the public around election time.

This is why groups as diverse as the American Civil Liberties Union, the Sierra Club and the National Rifle Association opposed this bill. In the future, I hope the American people will not

be blinded by campaigns to restrict their freedom of political expression. ANTHONY R.  
CONTE Winchester

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