

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since 1976, the American taxpayer has been funding presidential primary campaigns, presidential general election campaigns, and presidential party conventions. It is beyond time these political subsidies cease.

Since 1976, approximately 1.5 billion dollars has been spent on our presidential public financing system. Convention grants have been 187.2 million dollars; General-election nominee grants have been 911.3 million dollars; Primary matching funds have been 374.8 million dollars. This totals to 1.473 billion in current dollars.

At the time, proponents of taxpayer financing of presidential election campaigns and party conventions said it would improve the public's trust in their government, clean up our politics, and increase the number of quality candidates and thus the competitiveness we desire in our political campaigns.

It has failed on all accounts. The American people have historically low levels of trust in their government. By all accounts, our presidential campaigns have not steadily improved in honesty or civility. Nor have they been over-flowing with candidates willing to participate. In fact, major candidates and nominees now routinely opt-out of the system altogether.

Some may argue these tax dollars, this subsidy held in the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, are merely voluntary. To some

extent, that they are, Mr. Chairman, but the now-\$3 checked-off contributions are not an additional \$3 added to a person's tax liability. Instead, they are \$3 diverted from tax liabilities into this scheme, thus charging the rest of the American people to make up the difference in revenue to the federal government.

Furthermore, dramatically low numbers of Americans support this system. In 1980 the percentage of taxpayers participating through their tax form check-off was 28.7%. In '85 it was 23%. In '90 it was 19.5%. In '95 it was 13%. In 2000, it was 11%. In '05 9%, and according to IRS data obtained from the FEC, the check-off rate in 2010 hit its lowest yet at 7%.

As one can see, this candidate and convention subsidy is not popular. Mr. Chairman, putting the American taxpayer on the hook for

paying for our presidential primaries, presidential general elections, and my goodness, for our presidential party conventions, is wrong. It should be ended. Doing so will save taxpayers an estimated 617 million dollars over 10 years. This is sensible and long-overdue.

One of the central themes of this congress has been increased transparency and openness. In that spirit, I believe this bill should be brought to the floor under a modified open rule that will give all members, including those in the minority, a free and fair chance to offer amendments. Debate and the contest of ideas is the foundation of this House, and we should provide for it whenever possible. Any member who wants to offer an amendment that is germane to the bill and meets the requirements to offset new spending should have a chance to bring it up for debate on the floor. I urge the Rules Committee to report a rule to provide that chance.



**Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am ready to
answer any questions the committee may have.**