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Statement on the Petition to the Federal Election Commission To End the Soft Money System in Domestic Politics

June 5, 1997

Today I have asked the Federal Election Commission to act, within its current legal authority, to end the soft money system. Currently, both parties compete to raise large sums from corporations, individuals, and labor unions. There is too much money in politics, and the problem worsens with every election. This escalating arms race must stop, and I am determined that we will reform campaign finances, by every means we can.

Such an action by the FEC cannot be a substitute for comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation, which is currently before the Congress. In my State of the Union Address, I challenged Congress to act by July 4th and pass bipartisan reform. That deadline is now one month away, and there is still time for Congress to move forward on this priority. I call on Congress to pass legislation that institutes voluntary spending limits, provides free broadcast time to candidates who abide by those limits, restricts special interest contributions, addresses independent expenditures, and bans soft money.

It is clear that the current campaign finance system has been overwhelmed by an unprecedented volume of money. If we are to restore the public's faith in our institutions and the political system, we must reform the campaign finance system. This request to the FEC makes clear my determination that, one way or another, we will see reform, and we will end the soft money. I want to work in the coming days with Members of Congress to pass bipartisan and comprehensive campaign finance reform.

Statement on Supplemental Disaster Assistance Legislation

June 5, 1997

By attaching a political wish list to the much-needed disaster relief legislation, the congressional majority has chosen politics over the public interest.

The people of the Dakotas and Minnesota have been hit hard by devastating floods. They, and the people in other States around the country that have suffered disasters, urgently need funds from the enactment of a straightforward disaster relief bill. I have asked the Congress for such legislation.

Instead, the Republican majority in Congress has insisted on attaching to this vital legislation political provisions that they know are unacceptable. Among them, the bill would violate our balanced budget agreement, cutting critical investments in education and the environment instead of providing important increases in investments in these and other areas. In addition, it would prohibit the Commerce Department from taking steps to improve the accuracy and cut the costs of the year 2000 decennial census. There are other unacceptable provisions as well. None of them have any place in this legislation.

Disaster relief legislation is neither the time nor the place for these matters. Congress needs to appropriate this disaster relief, so communities can begin long-term recovery, and funds can continue for families to rebuild homes and businesses and farmers to dig out their fields to plant crops.

I call on the Republican leaders of Congress to keep the politics off disaster relief legislation. They should now, without delay, send me straightforward legislation without provisions that are not in the interest of the American people and that they know I will not accept.