

reform political debate over the public airwaves.

I applaud your previous decision to take the next steps toward providing such free and reduced rate time. The issues surrounding such a proposal are complex; there are a variety of ways to proceed, and the views of all interested parties should be considered. But I continue to believe that providing such airtime is the critical next step to strengthen our democracy, improve our political system, and give voters the loudest voice.

I strongly oppose any effort in the Congress to block your ability to take the next important steps for reform. Yesterday's defeat means that it will be virtually impossible for the Congress to move forward on campaign finance reform. The Congress should not make matters worse by actively blocking your progress.

The most realistic next steps for reform will come from the actions of regulatory agencies, acting within their legal authority, to renew our democracy. I thank you for your leadership and pledge to work with you as you move forward.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

Letter to Members of the Federal Election Commission on Campaign Finance Reform

February 27, 1998

To the Members of the Federal Election Commission:

Yesterday's defeat of comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation in the Senate makes it even more imperative that the Federal Election Commission (FEC) act to end the soft money system.

On June 4, 1997, I petitioned the FEC to act within its current statutory authority to end the soft money system. Your General Counsel, Lawrence Noble, has concluded that the FEC does, in fact, have the legal authority to act. This would be a major breakthrough for reform. I understand you have asked the General Counsel to explore other options—but the inability of the Congress to act on this vital public matter underscores

how urgent it is that the FEC proceed without delay.

The rules governing soft money are principally the legacy of decades of decisions by the FEC. You have it in your power to act now to end this system. If no action is taken, then in coming years the fundraising arms race that has consumed both parties will only worsen.

The Senate's failure to pass campaign finance reform legislation means the most realistic next steps for reform will come from the actions of regulatory agencies, acting within their legal authority, to renew our democracy. I thank the FEC for the steps it has taken thus far and urge you to press forward to end the soft money system.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

Proclamation 7069—American Red Cross Month, 1998

February 27, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans share a long tradition of compassion for others and lending aid to those in need. Since our earliest days as a Nation, we have been able to bear the heartbreak of family tragedy, personal hardship, or natural disaster because of the help of caring friends and neighbors. For 117 years, the American Red Cross has been the staunchest of friends and neighbors to millions of people both here at home and around the world, adding its own vital contributions to our history of service.

The American Red Cross brings both comfort and practical assistance to the victims of more than 65,000 disasters each year, from hurricanes and tornadoes affecting thousands of people to a house fire involving a single family. Members of the Red Cross also work on the front lines of armed conflicts and disasters across the globe to relieve suffering