

SAMPLE SPEECH - CAMPAIGN ETHICS SPEAKER'S BUREAU

OPENING REMARKS - appropriate comments for group

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the Campaign Ethics Committee today, and to speak for Act 1, the campaign ethics reform that will be voted on in the November 6 general election.

The people of our state and nation have come to realize that too often in our political process, special interest money outweighs the public interest. There's a general feeling that "money speaks louder than words", and in fact, one lobbyist here in our state made the comment that "dialogue with an office holder is a fine thing, but with a little money they hear better." Clearly, our elected officials cannot serve two masters - one, the constituents who elect them to office, and the other, special interests and big businesses who provide too much of the money necessary to win office - and whose goals are often at odds with those of the people.

I'm sure that many of you are aware that campaign finance reform is currently a hot issue on the national level. Evidence has come to light that campaign contributions have been used to buy political favors, and in the savings & loan scandal, to end-run regulators examining certain institutions. In the case of Lincoln Savings & Loan, the largest single failure, five senators intervened in the federal investigation and stalled the declaration of insolvency for over a year. Each of these senators had been given substantial campaign contributions by Lincoln owner Charles Keating. During

that one year period, Lincoln's losses doubled to over 5 billion dollars. When asked if he thought his contributions had influenced politicians, Keating's reply was, "I certainly hoped so." One of the consequences of the unethical conduct on the part of the five senators who intervened on Keating's behalf is a savings & loan bailout bill of over \$2000 for every man, woman, and child in the United States - and a significant portion of that can be attributed to this one case.

Do we have a problem with political influence being purchased with campaign contributions here in our state? We really don't know, and at this time we have no way of proving or disproving unethical conduct in the giving or acceptance of campaign funds. This is a result of a number of loopholes and oversights in our current campaign finance law - flaws which allow contributions to go unreported, and which, worst of all, invite unethical behavior. But people believe that money talks louder than ever to politicians, and that erodes public confidence in our election process.

Arkansas voters began to clean up state government in 1988 with the passage of the lobbyist disclosure act. You will recall, this act was initiated and passed overwhelmingly by the people after the General Assembly failed to enact self-regulation. Although lobbyist disclosure was a great step forward for ethics in Arkansas government, it did not address the issue of campaign financing. At the time that act was passed, one legislator commented that the act would have little impact on elected officials because "instead of reporting gifts we'll just call it a campaign contribution." The fact that the comment was made indicated the need to take a closer look

at campaign finance law, and the Campaign Ethics Committee was formed to do just that. The member organizations - the Arkansas League of Women Voters, Common Cause, AARP, and Arkansas IMPACT - joined with reform-minded legislators to undertake that study. After studying the campaign finance laws of other states and our own state, investigating current campaign finance records and practices, and holding citizen hearings in all parts of the state to determine how we should change the way political contests are financed in Arkansas, a proposed initiated act was drafted and submitted to the Attorney General for ballot title approval. After approval, petitions were circulated statewide to collect the 55,084 signatures of registered voters necessary to place the measure on the November 1990 general election ballot. Now that the reform has been guaranteed a place on the ballot with nearly 70,000 names on petitions - and is now known as Initiated Act 1 of 1990 - I want to tell you about the problems with the existing law, the changes proposed by Act 1, and hopefully, convince you of the necessity of passing the reform.

Arkansas' current campaign finance law has a number of provisions and oversights which allow contribution limits to be circumvented. We are one of only three states that do not regulate political action committees, or PACs. In 1988 state senate primary elections, an estimated \$137,500 of the total \$490,190 in contributions were made by PACs. This amount of money is too large to go unreported, and organizations with this much monetary influence should be regulated, so that citizens can see where the money is coming from, and where it is going. But currently, PACs