

Issue Area: Business
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March 17, 1997

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and the REALTORS® Political Action Committee, representing more than 730,000 members of our Association, we wish to express our deep concerns over attempts to reform the opportunity for citizens to freely participate in federal, state and local elections. We urge you to oppose Senate Joint Resolution 18, introduced by Senator Fritz Hollings (D-SC), and any other proposals which would amend the United States Constitution to permit contribution and expenditure limitations on federal, state and local elections.

The Hollings' Resolution, scheduled for a vote on Tuesday, would carve free political speech out of the Bill of Rights, and as a result, diminish participatory governance and democracy in America. The Constitutional right to petition our government stands behind our efforts to help our members become involved in the political process. Last year, approximately 118,000 REALTORS® contributed to the REALTORS® Political Action Committee with an average contribution of \$11.78. This is not a large contribution by most standards, but it is an exercise of our fundamental rights in a free society. Moreover, NAR's success as an advocacy organization is based on the fundamental principle that we achieve more by acting together than by acting separately. Our members expect the chance to support political candidates who agree with the goals of the Association. This is also a fundamental right of a free society.

In addition, we oppose campaign finance reforms like those embodied in McCain/Feingold (S. 25) which place restrictions on financial support, access to media, or the ability to communicate with concerned voters, such as the politically active voters who comprise our membership, thus stifling citizen involvement. By enacting such initiatives, Congress will not only deny our members, but citizens at large, the right to participate in elections and restrict their ability to express financial support for the candidates of their choice.

In closing, we urge you to oppose all attempts to limit or curtail American citizen's rights to participate in the political process.

Sincerely,

Russell K. Booth, President
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®