

FIRST AMENDMENT REFORM

Salmagundi

June 28, 2001

During 1896 and 1900 presidential elections Mark Hannah relied on large corporate donations to finance William McKinley's presidential campaign. Hannah said, "There are two things important in politics. The first is money and I can't remember what the second is."

In 1907 Congress passed the Tilman Act, which banned corporate contributions to presidential campaigns.

In 1910, Congress required post-election reports by national parties.

In 1911, the courts overturned spending limits in congressional races.

In 1941 courts gave back some of that authority.

By 1925 additional spending caps seemed to have been ignored.

In 1939 Congress passed the Hatch Act which prohibited political activity by public employees.

In 1940, Congress limited contributions by individuals to \$5,000 to federal campaigns.

In 1943, Congress prohibited labor unions from contributing to campaigns. By this time campaign finance regulation was generally not comprehensive, easy to evade, both legally and illegally.

In 1971 Congress passed the Federal Election Finance Act which limited the amounts that could be spent on advertising, limited contributions to one's own campaign and required public disclosure.

After Watergate, Congress passed 1974 amendments which limited contributions by individuals, parties and PAC's, created the Federal Election Commission, provided a mechanism