

## ACLU Prepares to Defend First Amendment in Campaign Finance Struggle

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, March 21, 2002**

WASHINGTON -- The ACLU has long supported campaign finance reform through the public financing of political campaigns. Congress, however, chose not to adopt this effective and constitutional method of campaign finance reform. Instead, it enacted a constitutionally flawed law that, among other things, would severely restrict the ability of even nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations like the ACLU from expressing their views on important public issues in the period immediately preceding an election, a time when those issues are most urgently debated.

The ACLU therefore is compelled to go to court to defend the First Amendment, as we did more than a quarter of a century ago when similar restrictions on political speech were struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in *Buckley v. Valeo*. We are currently weighing our various legal strategies and will have an announcement soon.

Just last week, in a move that both showcased the problem of workplace discrimination in America and the constitutional flaws of campaign finance legislation, the American Civil Liberties Union ran a series of radio and newspapers issue ads that would be outlawed under the new campaign finance legislation.

The radio advertisement was broadcast to more than 50,000 people in the congressional district of Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The advertisement called on Speaker Hastert to permit a floor vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a bill that would prohibit employment discrimination against gays and lesbians.

The ACLU ad was broadcast within 30 days of a primary election, an election in which Speaker Hastert was running unopposed. Yet, under the campaign finance legislation that the Senate approved yesterday, the ad would have been prohibited even though it did not urge voters to support or oppose Speaker Hastert's reelection.

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