

Iowa: The Gray Lady Freaks Out

Some years ago, back when McCain-Feingold was new, I noted that it had been sold much like a 19th-century patent medicine: “It’s good for what ails ya.” Think campaigns are too long? McCain-Feingold. Too negative? McCain-Feingold. Special interests too powerful? McCain-Feingold. Don’t like the candidates? McCain-Feingold. And so on.

Indeed, McCain-Feingold – with its limitations on spending money to advertise in the days close to an election, its restrictions on funds for party building, and its ridiculous requirement that candidates devote roughly 10 percent of each ad to explaining that “I approve this message” – like the Federal Election Campaign Act (“FECA”) that it amended, failed miserably to accomplish any of these goals. It’s odd that anyone ever thought it would; after all, generally speaking, attempting to limit political speech is not usually considered a healthy thing in a democracy.

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