

NEWS FROM:

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On election night, the two senators who head up their parties' campaign committees, spoke to C-SPAN about campaign financing, political action committees, and negative political campaigns. Here are a few of their comments:

On campaign financing:

Sen. George Mitchell (D-ME), Chairman, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee: (That Republicans outspent Democrats by a wide margin indicates) "money, although important in politics, is not everything. That candidates who have at least enough money to get their message across and who are quality candidates can still win."

"I think the system is badly in need of change. There is an enormous financial imbalance in the system and were it not for the tremendous dollar advantage the Republicans have, the only suspense tonight would be whether the Democrats win 60 seats in the Senate or not. The money advantage enabled the Republicans to make close what otherwise would not have been a close contest. "

Sen. John Heinz (R-PA), Chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee:

"The biggest problem is that the cost of campaigns keeps going up. And it's not just that campaigns are more competitive and tougher and rougher and there's more negative advertising. That's true, but the cost of television -- the 30 second spot -- is up 100 per cent in the last six years; those consultants who make those spots and do lots of work in the campaigns -- their per diems are up; The postal service has increased postal rates nearly twice in the last six years. It's the cost of campaigns that causes everybody to go out and spend so darn much money and I think we're going to be looking for a better solution. I'm not certain we can find one."

On changing the campaign financing system:

Sen. Mitchell: "I believe very strongly we should adopt the presidential system which is a combination of private contributions with public matching funds and spending limits to the Senate races. If it's good enough to elect a president, it ought to be good enough to elect senators."

On political action committees:

Sen. Heinz: "I think they've had a major influence on politics. They've been a source of additional funding. They've allowed candidates to run more aggressive campaigns. I think most of the charges that they are buying influence are pretty much overrated. For the most part contributions, PAC's or individuals, tend to follow the record of a candidate..., on both



sides of the aisle."

On the Senate Campaign Committee's strategy:

Sen. Mitchell: " Our strategy was to get the best possible candidates we could in every state. That sounds obvious, but it requires a great deal of effort and early planning. We thought very early that there wouldn't be an overriding national issue, that it would be a series of state races dealing with issues in particular states, so we invested a great deal of time and effort in getting the best possible candidates. In most cases, we succeeded, in some cases we did not. But overall, I think the difference in this year's election is the quality of the Democratic candidates. Essentially what you had is the Republican money and the president's popularity trying to prop up a group of really rather weak candidates against a group of Democratic candidates who by and large -- we're not perfect, we've got our share of turkeys, as well -- but by and large stronger individual candidates and I think that's the difference."

Sen. Heinz: (with so many incumbents) what we had to try to do more than anything else was showcase their legislative abilities, to give them an opportunity...on the floor to show their legislative abilities and develop a record they could run on. For the most part, that's what they've done...and if they don't get elected, it'll be partly do to the negative trend this election..."

On negative campaigns:

Sen. Heinz: " Such a major factor in this election. As somebody who's probably going to be running for reelection in 1988, I tell you I don't look forward to the kind of campaigns I'm likely to run in to. I hope I won't wage one just two years from now. I know what my colleagues have been through and it's not fun for anybody. It's not fun for the opponent, or the senator that's involved -- or their family."

Sen. Mitchell: In 1980, the Republicans adopted it (negative campaigning) on a wide scale; Democratic candidates, by and large, didn't respond. They thought, 'well, the voters know us. They won't believe that stuff.' Most of them were swept out of office. As a result, what we're seeing now is when a negative campaign begins on one side, the person on the other side responds. So you're seeing a sort of doubling...and the campaigns tend to degenerate. The sad thing is there are very serious issues that ought to be debated on which there are legitimate differences. Neither side has a monopoly on brains or talent. Neither side has a monopoly on what's right for this country and the voters ought to be entitled to a serious, meaningful debate...they haven't gotten it...I hope in 1988 candidates think about that before launching into this type of campaign."