The 1,500,000 vote restriction is necessary to avoid the proliferation of small parties interested more in publicity at public expense than in seriously offering a candidate for President. The level is low enough, however, to insure that any party which once gained significant voter support would come under the act and, if it kept this support, stay under it. Even minor party candidates would be able to refuse contributions offered on a strings-attached basis. Once a party gained 10 million or more votes in a presidential election, it would qualify as a major party and share equally with the other major parties in the major party funds made available in the next presidential election.

THE PLAN IS SUPERIOR TO A TAX DEDUCTION SCHEME

While this plan may seem novel, thoughtful consideration will show that it has many advantages over a tax deduction scheme of the type proposed by the President and several Senators, including the ranking member of the minority on the Finance Committee, the Senator from Delaware. In the first place, it would be more equitable. Every tax deduction scheme suffers from the disadvantage that it gives the rich taxpayer a larger tax saving than the poor taxpayer. For example, the President proposed a tax deduction of up to $100. The taxpayer in the highest income bracket would receive a tax saving of $70 by contributing $100 under this scheme, while the taxpayer in the bottom bracket would receive a tax saving of only $14.

I want to add, Mr. President, that you cannot gain much by making the deduction available in addition to the standard deduction. That might put standard deduction taxpayers and itemized deduction taxpayers on a par, but, as I have explained, it will not put high and low bracket taxpayers on a par. In fact, it would create more problems. By placing political contributions on a better footing than charitable contributions, it would put politicians in a more favorable category than the Almighty.

The equity consideration points out a second shortcoming in the tax deduction plan. We want to provide an incentive for low- and middle-income people to provide campaign funds, but the tax deduction plan would provide the greatest incentive to high income people. I submit that the high income people do not need any incentive. They are the ones who do the campaign financing now.

In the third place, the funds provided by the committee-approved plan would clearly be adequate to finance a presidential campaign. Thus, we would be assured that there would be no reason why a few large contributors should ever be given an opportunity to establish a basis for exerting undue influence on the President. The tax deduction plans, on the other hand, cover contributions to campaigns at all levels of government. Thus diluted, the effect of the plan is probably not strong enough to eliminate the need for large contributions in any single campaign.

And this brings up another point. If we were to approve a tax deduction for campaign contributions, we would have to authorize the Internal Revenue Service to check to make sure that the money was actually contributed and that it was actually used for political purposes. We would have to give the Internal Revenue Service the go-ahead, in other words, to investigate the political activity of every voter and the conduct of every election, Federal, State, and local. Frankly, Mr. President, I do not think we want to risk violating the sanctity of the ballot this way.

The committee plan would, of course, have an effect on other political campaigns. Since the presidential campaigns would be entirely or largely paid for through the fund, more money would be available from private contributors for campaigns for the Senate, for the House, and for State and local offices. The greater availability of funds would make it easier for a candidate to decline a contribution to which strings were attached. Moreover, if this plan works as well as I think it will, we may wish to consider extending it to cover other Federal election campaigns. It seems to me, however, that the financing of campaigns for State and local government offices is a matter which should be left to State and local governments. If we consider the Federal Government to be beyond the undue influences which occur in financing campaigns, then it would seem that State and local governments should be able to arrange their own problems.

I think it is fitting that the plan should be applied to presidential elections, at least at first, since it is most important to avoid the exercise of undue influence over the Presidency. The President influences the quality of government at all levels by, for example, the way he exercises the veto, by the nature of the legislation he introduces, by the nature of the appointments he makes, and by the way he oversees the execution of the laws passed by Congress. Congress, as I have said before, cannot get into any real mischief unless somebody in the executive branch is a party to it.

I have heard it said that this provision would not reduce the pressure for large contributions but will merely provide additional funds. I do not understand this position. It is clear to me that if the Republican and Democratic Parties are each assured of some $37 million for their next presidential campaign, they will not find it necessary to spend so much time and energy soliciting large