

## McCain promotes judicial campaign reform and voter education at benefit luncheon

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**United States Senator John McCain held a benefit luncheon to promote judicial campaign reform and voter education. Proceeds from lunch benefited the North Carolina Public Campaign Financing Fund.**

In a recent visit to North Carolina, coordinated by the North Carolina Center for Voter Education and the Alexandria, Virginia-based Reform Institute, United States Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) held a benefit luncheon at Meredith College. The luncheon was intended to promote judicial campaign reform and voter education, and to raise funds for the newly created North Carolina Public Campaign Financing Fund. The fund pays for a non-partisan voter guide and helps finance appellate judicial candidates who accept strict fundraising and spending limits.

Dr. Maureen Hartford, president of Meredith College, gave a welcome address to those in attendance at the luncheon. Hartford said having the event on Meredith's campus allows the College to accomplish its mission to create a community in

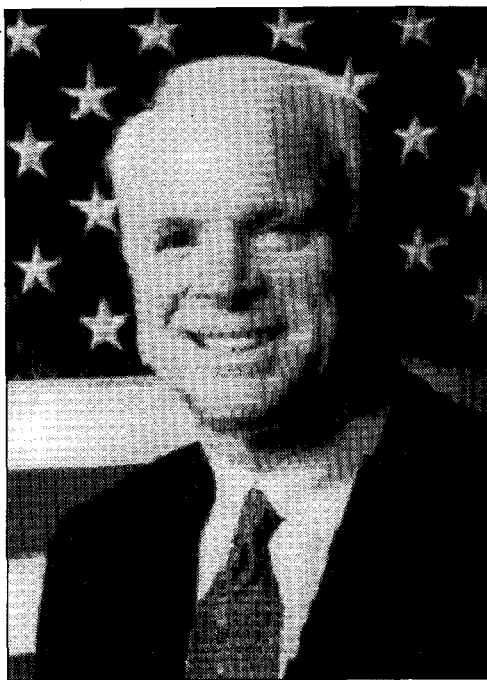
which students can "learn from the past, prepare for the future, and grow in their understanding of self, others, and community. To these ends, Meredith strives to develop in students the knowledge, skills, values, and global awareness necessary to pursue careers, to assume leadership roles, to continue their education, and to lead responsible lives of work, citizenship, leisure, and service (Meredith College mission statement)."

McCain began his speech by explaining there has been a recent grass roots movement, as indicated by its approval from the legislature, that strongly supports a mandate for free air time for candidates 30 days prior to elections.

He said in some states candidates receive millions of dollars from special interest groups. Such contributions create the appearance of influence from special interest groups on the rule of law.

McCain said the judiciary is currently the most esteemed branch of government, and voter education guides will help constituents know more about all candidates. Judicial campaign reform will increase voters' confidence in the rule of law, he said.

In this respect, Judicial Campaign Reform is important because the rule



**United States Senator John McCain**  
Photo courtesy of ncjudges.org website.

of law is the most difficult to reach and at the same time, the easiest to corrupt.

"You can pass laws but it is difficult to have laws enforced by honest judiciary," he said.

McCain cited the country of Georgia as an example of political corruption. He said, Georgia has no judicial system; therefore, it is difficult to know if the elections are fair because there is no way to enforce law.

"There are all kinds of special interests that want to influence the judicial system. That is why Judicial Campaign Reform is so important," said McCain.

In addition to speaking on Judicial Campaign Reform, McCain spoke on the relationship between Federal Communication Commission ownership of media stations and political

free speech. There is an increasing concern over media concentration regarding political campaigning. "It is unhealthy for one major conglomerate to own all media outputs," he said.

McCain addressed a wide array of questions from the audience ranging from FCC ownership to celebrity politics and the recent elections in California. A member of the audience expressed concern over the politics of celebrity fame is a

threat to political campaigns as well.

McCain noted the overwhelming unpopularity of Governor Davis in California as the main source of support for Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"Was [the California election] a good thing for democracy? I don't know, but it sure was fun to watch," McCain said.

He said the major vulnerability in the McCain-Feingold Bill concerns the requirement that advertisements must be funded in the same manner the candidate is funded. McCain said the Federal Elections

Commission opened loopholes in existing laws regarding campaign finance that allowed for ways around those laws that restrict campaign funding.

McCain is the nation's leading legislative advocate for campaign finance reform, and one of the chief architects of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), a sweeping campaign finance reform law that was recently passed by Congress. BCRA outlaws soft money and places more emphasis on political advertising.

McCain said, "Now the battle for campaign finance reform shifts from the federal to the state level."

The Honorable Edwin G. Wilson, Jr., president of the NC Center for Voter Education, addressed the audience prior to McCain's speech explaining the purpose of the benefit.

Following his remarks, Chief Executive Officer of Capitol Broadcasting Jim Goodmon spoke on the need for judicial reform and the role the media plays in campaigning and voter education.

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