of the American people believe that the war in Iraq was not worth fighting. Let's listen to the American people, Mr. Speaker. Let's bring our troops and military contractors out of Iraq, but let's not repeat the same military folly in other parts of the region.

TEXAS IGNORES WORLD COURT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, Texas, the State of Texas, has ignored the order of the World Court in Geneva. Let me give you the facts of this case.

Fifteen years ago in 1993 there were two young teenage girls by the name of Jennifer Ertman, 14, and Elizabeth Pena, 16, headed home as the sun set in Houston, Texas.

They took a shortcut so they could get home in a timely fashion, as ordered by their parents. That was their fatal mistake. They came in contact with a group of gangsters headed by Jose Medellin. It was a gang initiation. The girls stumbled upon the gang of gangsters, and these gangsters kidnapped, held hostage, and brutally sexually assaulted these two girls for as long as they wished.

□ 1545

After they were through, they tortured them, and Jose Medellin strangled each of them with their shoelaces. Medellin was proud of his conduct. He was later arrested by the Houston Police Department along with others from his group of bandits, specifically Derrick O'Brien, Peter Cantu and two others.

These individuals were tried by Texas juries. A Texas jury found that Derrick O'Brien committed the worst crime in our society, ordered the death penalty, and he's been executed.

The ringleader of the case, Jose Medellin, well, his case has been on appeal for 15 years. Here's what has happened in his case. He was convicted. His case worked its way all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Supreme Court upheld this conviction. Then years later he says, I should have been allowed to talk to my Mexican consulate at some time during the proceeding, even though he never requested it upon his arrest.

Of course, then, the Federal Government gets involved in the case. The case works its way back through the Supreme Court. Before it gets to the Supreme Court, the administration, the White House, intervened and told Texas courts to give Medellin a new trial because he was not allowed to ask or see his Mexican consulate, even though he didn't request it. Remember, Medellin was illegally in the United States, even though he had been here since he was 6 months of age.

The State of Texas, the Texas courts, in all due respect to the President of the United States, ignored his request. The case went back to the Supreme Court, right down the street.

A few months ago the Supreme Court of the United States said, World Court has no jurisdiction. The President of the United States has no jurisdiction to tell the courts in Texas what to do and upheld his conviction and ordered him executed.

But, once again, the World Court intervened yesterday, and said the State of Texas cannot execute Medellin.

Well, let me tell you something, the State of Texas on August 5 is going to execute this defendant for what he did. The State of Texas has decided that the World Court has no jurisdiction to tell the State of Texas or any other State what to do. I think it was put appropriately by the fathers of these two girls.

No parent wants to see their child die before their time, especially the way that these two girls died. I have four kids, three of them are girls; and seven grandkids, four of them are girls. Here's what one of the fathers had to say about the death of his daughter. He said, ''The World Court doesn't mean diddly. This business belongs in the State of Texas. The people of the State of Texas support the execution. We thank them.''

More appropriately, the other father, Adolfo Pena, the father of Elizabeth Pena, said, ''I believe we have been through all the red tape we can go through. It's time to rock and roll.''

Justice must be served for victims of crime. 15 years justice has been waiting, in this specific case, 15 years, longer than one of the girls even lived. This defendant arrogantly has been sitting on death row.

I was a judge when this case was tried back in Texas in the 1990s, and it was one of the worst crimes we had ever heard in our city, where two teenage girls minding their own business were kidnapped by a bunch of gangsters, sexually assaulted, tortured, murdered and the criminals bragged about this conduct.

Today is judgment day for Jose Medellin. He deserves the death penalty, he earned it, and justice demands it, whether the World Court likes it or not.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PRESIDENTIAL SIGNING STATEMENTS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on May 8, 2008, I introduced H.R. 5993, the Presidential Signing Statements Act. This bill would promote congressional and public awareness and understanding of Presidential signing statements. I am very pleased that next Friday the House Judiciary Committee will examine the issue of Presidential signing statements as part of a hearing on the balance of powers in our government.

The history of Presidential signing statements dates back to the 19th century. However, on September 17, 2007, a Congressional Research Service report noted that U.S. presidents have increasingly employed these statements to assert constitutional and legal objections to congressional enactments.

In doing so, Presidents sometimes communicate their intent to disregard certain provisions of bills they have signed into law. It is for this reason that I have introduced the Presidential Signing Statements Act. Just as the American people have access to the text of bills that are signed into law, they should have easy and prompt access to the content of Presidential signing statements that could affect how those the laws will be executed. To enable a more complete public understanding of our Nation's laws, the Congress should also be able to call for the executive explanation and justification for a Presidential signing statement.

According to CRS, President Clinton signed 381 signing statements while in office. Seventy of these statements raised legal and constitutional objections. President George Bush has signed 157 signing statements, 122 of these statements contain some type of constitutional challenge or objections. Because future Presidents are likely to continue this practice, Congress should act now to pass legislation to ensure proper understanding and disclosure of these signing statements.

The American Bar Association recently examined the issue of presidential signing statements and appointed the task force on presidential signing statements and the separation of powers doctrine.

The task force issued a report urging Congress to enact legislation requiring the President to promptly submit to Congress an official copy of all signing statements he issues and to submit a congressional, to the Congress, a report setting forth in full the reasons and legal basis for this statement. The ABA also recommended that such submissions be available in a publicly accessible database.

The bill that I introduced would require the President to provide copies of signing statements to congressional leadership within 3 days of being issued. Secondly, it would require signing statements to be published in the Federal Register; and, third, require executive staff to testify on the meaning and justification for Presidential signing statements at the request of the House or Senate Judiciary Committee; and, fourth, provide that no monies may be used to implement any

law accompanied by the signing statements if any provision of the act is violated.

Because it's critical that we preserve the division of power in our government and public understanding of our Nation's laws, I hope many of my colleagues will consider cosigning the Presidential Signing Statements Act.

I look forward to next week's House Judiciary Committee hearing, and the opportunity to further discuss why this legislation is a much-needed piece of legislation.

Before I close, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform in Afghanistan and Iraq, and ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform, and ask God to continue to bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IT'S TIME TO PASS A FEDERAL MEDIA SHIELD LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, the Constitution of the United States provides that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press. These two rights form the bedrock of our democracy by ensuring the free flow of information to the American people.

Sadly, today, the free and independent press in America is under fire. In recent years, more than 40 journalists have been subpoenaed, questioned or held in contempt for failure to reveal their confidential sources.

For a journalist, maintaining an assurance of confidentiality to a source is sometimes the only way to bring forward news of great consequence to the Nation. Being forced to reveal a source chills reporting of the news, and, thereby, restricts the free flow of information to the public.

Now, not long ago, a reporter's assurance of confidentiality was unquestioned. That assurance led to sources that willingly provided information to journalists who brought forward news of enormous consequence to the Nation. One thinks of Watergate, recent stories of misfeasance at Walter Reed Army medical center, and even the abuse of steroids in major league baseball.

All of these stories never would have come to the light, stories great and small, were it not for confidential sources and the dogged persistence of a free and independent press. As a conservative who believes in a limited government, I believe the only check on government power in real time is a free and independent press.

A free press ensures the flow of information to the public, and in this time of scandals and rumors of scandals and corruption in high places, such information is needed now more than ever to hold those in power to account. In order to maintain our free and independent press, I authored the Free Flow of Information Act with Congressman RICK BOUCHER of Virginia several years ago. This bill is also known as a Federal media shield statute. It provides a qualified privilege of confidentiality to journalists, which enables them to shield sources from disclosure in certain situations.

Now, the bill is not about protecting reporters, it's about protecting the public's right to know. We introduced the bill in May of 2007, and on October 16 of last year, it passed in this House of Representatives by an overwhelming and bipartisan margin of 398–21. I was especially pleased to earn the support of Republican and Democratic leadership, the chairman and ranking members of the Intelligence and Armed Services Committee, and many other leaders throughout the House of Representatives.

The bill received wide bipartisan support because of measures we added to specifically address very real and legitimate concerns about how a privilege for journalists could impact national security. The Federal Government, as we know, is tasked with a tremendous responsibility of protecting the Nation. We must always put national security in the forefront of our consideration.

The Free Flow of Information Act does just that. Well, with news that the United States Senate may be taking up a version of this legislation as soon as next week, I wanted to rise to speak about the bill and what some of its critics may say.

Critics of the bill will point always to concerns about national security. But our version of the bill only provides a qualified privilege, meaning that disclosure of a source's identity may be required in certain situations. The foremost of those situations, of course, is when the Nation's security is placed at risk. The bill permits compelled disclosure to prevent or identify the perpetrator of an act of terrorism against the United States or its allies, to prevent significant or specified harm to national security, or, in cases that involved the unauthorized disclosure of classified information that caused or will cause significant or articulable harm to national security. In such cases, a judge will be able to determine whether the public interest, in compelling disclosure of a source, outweighs the public interest in gathering or disseminating news or information.

Overall, I sincerely believe the bill strikes a reasonable balance between the public's right to know and the fair administration of justice. In striking that balance, the version of the legislation that passed this House puts national security first.

Long ago Thomas Jefferson warned, ''Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that limited without danger of losing it.'' Jefferson's words hold true today.

The passage of the Free Flow of Information Act in this Congress is necessary not only to explicitly and fully provide for the freedom and press of our Nation, but also to protect our liberty for future generations of Americans. With the extraordinary bipartisan support of my colleagues in the House of Representatives, and support in the United States Senate, which includes both major party candidates for President of the United States, it is my hope that the United States Senate will take up the Free Flow of Information Act and report it next week with a strong bipartisan affirmation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WHERE IS THE HOUSE?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, here we are, Thursday afternoon, 3:58 p.m. All across the Nation, the day shift is ending, or about to end. Folks getting ready for the afternoon shift. Other folks that work the night shift are either just waking up or just going to sleep to get prepared for another day, another day of work.

Where is the House? The House has gone home, Thursday afternoon, and the House has gone home, not to return until next Tuesday. What didn't we do this week, like we didn't do last week, and the week before, and the week before, we didn't address the number one issue on the minds of Americans and hurting the American pocketbook, and that's the issue of gas prices, didn't address it, nothing.

□ 1600

Now, the majority will tell you that they brought to the floor a drill bill. What they brought to the floor today, Mr. Speaker, cynically, was what they called a drill bill. In fact, it was really just a ''no energy'' energy bill.

Why do I say that? Well, the bill had eight sections. Six sections are either current law or are clerical. Current law: No new energy. One of the sections mandated project labor agreements that would increase the construction costs of Alaskan pipelines by as much as 30 percent. Increasing costs: No new energy. The final section would increase the bureaucracy and the red tape for any new energy production. It didn't open any exploration onshore. It