

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.

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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