



Press Release

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SCHIFF, PENCE INTRODUCE DANIEL PEARL FREEDOM OF THE PRESS ACT

Bill requires annual report on the health of freedom of the press worldwide and creates grants to strengthen press freedom around the globe

WASHINGTON, DC—Today, Representatives Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Mike Pence (R-IN), co-chairmen of the Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press, introduced legislation today to highlight and promote freedom of the press worldwide. The Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act is named in honor of former Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl who was kidnapped and murdered by terrorists in Pakistan, just four months after the September 11th attacks. The legislation will establish an annual State Department report on the status of press freedom in every country in the world and create a grant program aimed at broadening and strengthening the independence of journalists and media organizations.

“Freedom of expression cannot exist where journalists and the media are not independent and safe from persecution and attack,” said Schiff. **“Our government must promote freedom of the press by putting on center stage those countries in which journalists are killed, imprisoned, kidnapped, threatened, or censored.”**

“I can think of no better way to honor the memory of Daniel Pearl,” Pence said. **“This legislation takes valuable steps in highlighting and supporting the critical work of investigative journalism, while putting on notice those countries who choose to ignore the freedom of the press and perpetrate violence and censorship that should offend the conscience of all those who cherish freedom.”**

Background:

The legislation (attached) calls upon the Secretary of State to submit an annual report that will assess the state of press freedom in every country and will bring attention to those governments, extremists, and criminal groups which seek to silence free expression.

Additionally, the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act will establish a grant program which will help foster the cultivation of independent media in countries where it is needed most. Often, media assistance programs are short-term, ranging from one year projects to weekend workshops, which makes it difficult to build a solid foundation for independent media before funding runs out. The Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act will give prominence to freedom of the press projects within the State Department, and ensure a long-term, holistic approach to journalist and media development.

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