

THE PRESIDENT'S PRIORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, all too often we've seen this administration turn a blind eye toward the priorities of our very country. While the administration has consistently failed to demonstrate restraint when it comes to escalating the occupation of Iraq, it has cold-heartedly insisted on denying the children of struggling working families with health insurance in the name of fiscal discipline. Once again, the values of the administration are glaringly out of step with the values of the American people.

The administration will not stand for accountability, transparency, or dissent when it comes to ending the occupation of Iraq. They will, however, support another blank check, resulting in more lives lost and more of our priorities left unfunded.

Earlier today, the House voted on overriding the President's veto of the children's health insurance reauthorization, or SCHIP. When the President vetoed SCHIP, he argued that the appearance of fiscal responsibility was more important than the health of 10 million of our children in this Nation. But when we learned that insuring 10 million children in America for 1 year costs the same as 40 days in Iraq, it is clear that the administration does not have its priorities straight.

Mr. Speaker, supporting our service men and women is certainly our absolute responsibility. Our Nation has an obligation to those who sacrifice and defend us during times of war. However, our servicemembers in Iraq were sent into combat without adequate training, without state-of-the-art body armor and equipment, and without assurances that their tours of duty will not be overextended. The glaring failures in Iraq show that not only is the Bush administration defunding our Nation's priorities to continue the occupation, but that it is allowing much of that money to be wasted.

The Inspector General has reported that \$8.8 billion appropriated for Iraq's reconstruction cannot be accounted for. Media sources have recently reported that the administration is constructing a \$600 million American Embassy located in the Green Zone in Iraq. This embassy, which is the largest in the world, in fact, it is larger than the Vatican, this embassy will include grocery stores, a movie theater, tennis courts and a social club.

It will require \$1 billion a year to keep it up and to be maintained. Instead of our children's health care, the priorities of the Bush administration seem to be waste, fraud and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, when the administration vetoes a bipartisan investment in health insurance for our Nation's children, it rejects the priorities of the American people. When the administration spends billions on constructing

and maintaining an embassy in Iraq while Iraq's infrastructure collapses around them, it compromises the safety of our troops abroad. And when the administration refuses to end the occupation in Iraq, it assures that countless generations will suffer for their mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, the priorities of the American people are clear. They want to provide health care for children. They want to promote peace and protect our troops. They want us to fully fund the efforts to bring our troops home. They want us to do it now.

□ 1415

THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor weary but well after a week in which I have had the privilege of being involved in not one but two debates over the very freedoms enshrined in the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States. I am humbled as someone who not only has been charged with public duties in representing the good people of eastern Indiana here on the floor of the Congress, but I am humbled as someone who, from my youth, has been fascinated with the freedoms enshrined in the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

This week, I had the privilege of seeing legislation that I authored 3 years ago come to the floor of this Congress and be adopted in overwhelming and bipartisan measure. It was legislation known as the Free Flow of Information Act that I first introduced in the last Congress in partnership with Congressman RICK BOUCHER of Virginia, and our journey over these last 36 months brought us to that moment, this Tuesday, where we were able, through regular order, through a thorough process of committee hearings and markups and amendments on the floor, to see the first Federal legislation concerning the freedom of the press to be adopted by this Congress, a sense that freedom was enshrined in the first amendment and added by Congress to the Constitution itself.

What was especially gratifying to me was that we did it in a bipartisan way. Because I want to say as a recurrent theme this afternoon that on this floor there are many differences of opinion, but freedom is not a partisan issue in the House of Representatives. And the freedom of the press and the freedom of speech proved this week not to be a partisan issue, when 398 of our colleagues came together across the partisan divide to say "yes" to a free and independent press.

I come before this Chamber today, Mr. Speaker, to say "thanks" and to

say how moving it was for me to play some small role in putting what I believe was a stitch in a tear in the fabric of the first amendment, freedom of the press. In that legislation known as the Free Flow of Information Act, we created for the first time a privilege, a qualified privilege for reporters to keep information and sources confidential.

Now, this was not a radical step. Some 33 States already have statutes that protect a reporter's privilege. But it was the first time that it has succeeded in passing the House of Representatives on the Federal level. And we await action by the Senate on similar legislation and hope for a conference committee and resolution of the matter that it might be sent to the President. We also hope, despite concerns expressed by the administration, that we can continue to shape this legislation, continue to work with the good men and women in the Department of Justice Criminal Division to dial it in in such a way that would make it possible for this President to sign this legislation.

I come before you today not just because I was privileged to co-author legislation that protected a reporter's right to the freedom of the press and a free and independent press enshrined in the Constitution, but also because I have authored one other piece of legislation about which we have taken action this week which is also about freedom of the press. It is called the Broadcaster Freedom Act. It is principally my purpose for coming before the Chamber today. But in each case, I want to begin by saying, Mr. Speaker, that I see the two as inextricably linked, that the work that Congressman RICK BOUCHER and I with, now, 390-plus of our colleagues to strengthen a free and independent press for those who engage in the business of reporting the news, we were attempting to do just as vigorously and just as effectively for those who commentate on the news. Because it has been the subject of commentators, especially commentators on talk radio in America, about which there has been much discussion and much consternation since this summer. And as I will expand further, there has been what I would characterize as, both on Capitol Hill and off Capitol Hill, troubling discussion about returning censorship on the airwaves of America by reimposing what used to be known as the Fairness Doctrine on radio and television broadcast outlets in this country.

I want to begin by stitching these two projects together because I think they are linked. Back in southern Indiana, we like to say "what is good for the goose is good for the gander." The press freedom that our Founders enshrined in the first amendment for those that engage in reporting is also the same freedom I would argue that protects those that are engaged in commentating. We tend to forget that opinions that we hear, left, right and center, on radio and television are

every bit as much protected by the first amendment freedom of the press than those who are typing copy and bylines that appear on the front page of the Indianapolis Star, the Muncie Star Press, the New York Times or the Washington Post. And the business of reporting and the business of commenting are two time-honored traditions in the practice of American press that I have been able to be a part of strengthening and defending this week.

As I said, now on the first, the creation of a reporter's privilege, we were able to come to the floor and pass that legislation out of the House in strong bipartisan measure. On the second, we took action this week to file a, Mr. Speaker, what is known as a discharge petition at the Calendar here in the House of Representatives to enable the Broadcaster Freedom Act to come to the floor for an up-or-down vote.

I want to explain to my colleagues and to anyone else looking on the import of that discharge petition and why I believe it is every bit as important that we have a vote on the Broadcaster Freedom Act as I believed it was important that we have a vote on the Free Flow of Information Act.

Let me take a half step back and say once again what a joy it was for me on both of these measures to be doing freedom's work here on the floor of the Congress. Because we debate many things in our various committees and responsibilities here, some foreign, some domestic, and some having to do with spending, some things as mundane as roads and bridges and potholes, but as we saw today with our newly elected colleague, Congresswoman TSONGAS from Massachusetts, every one of us takes a very simple oath. We raise our right hand, as she did in this Chamber today, in a moment I was privileged to attend as a new colleague. We raise our right hand and we take an oath to support and uphold the Constitution of the United States and to protect her against all enemies, foreign and domestic. It is at the very center of what we are here to do. In the first amendment of that Constitution, this Congress is specifically enjoined. We are, in effect, commanded by our Founding Fathers to make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press. It was an application of that principle, a principle that I believe is a principle of limited government, because I happen to believe in my heart of hearts, as I said during the debate over the Federal media shield bill this week, that as a conservative who believes in limited government, I think the only check on government power in real-time is a free and independent press. There is actually nothing more consistent with my belief in limited government than my vigorous defense and advance of the interests of a free and independent press.

Now, that being said, while we have the success on the one, we need an up-or-down vote on the other for reasons that I want to describe. But I want to be clear on the point that I believe this

is all tied up in our duty that each one of the 435 Members of this Congress embraced in taking that oath of office. Because I can't help but feel that whether it was the erosion of an independent press and a rising tide of reporters being threatened with subpoenas, subpoenaed, and even being put into jail that was encroaching on that injunction in the first amendment, I also believe that much of the talk about restoring regulation and outright censorship to the airwaves of America, particularly the radio airwaves of America, is also violative of that specific language in the first amendment.

Now, about the Fairness Doctrine. The American people love a fair fight, and so do I, especially where the issues of the day are debated. But I would submit that in a free market, fairness should be based on equal opportunity, not equal results. And the fairness doctrine, as it was applied to 4 decades in American radio, was a doctrine that, while it was perhaps borne of the best intentions, it was not about the equal opportunity in a wide range of ideas, but it was about dictating results on the airwaves of America. Here is where it came from.

The Radio Act of 1929 was passed into law by this Congress, perhaps well-debated in this very room. When it became law there were, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, very few radio stations in America. I don't know the exact number off the top of my head, but radio at the time of the Depression was in its infancy. By the time that the Federal Communications Commission got around to passing the regulations that came to be known as the Fairness Doctrine in 1939, there was virtually no television in America, and radio was still in its infancy. Many communities in America, having no indigenous radio station at all, but the regulations folks then came along and said, look, there is a limited number of radio stations in America, in 1929 to 1939, and so the thought was because they are, the airwaves belong to the public, that, in effect, the Federal Communications Commission ought to make sure that both sides of controversial issues is debated fairly and evenly. It sounded reasonable enough at the time, I suspect, and while it rubs against my more libertarian instincts, I will say, there may have been a legitimate basis for the Fairness Doctrine in 1929, less so, but maybe in 1939, because of the scarce number of radio signals that were there. But from 1939 to 1987, for 4 decades, the Fairness Doctrine reined on the airwaves of America.

□ 1430

As we learned in those 40-some-odd years, there is nothing fair about the Fairness Doctrine. The elements of this regulation that were designed to ensure that both sides of the argument were heard ended up having the effect of ensuring that in most cases, on most radio stations, no sides of the argument were heard.

The reality is that from 1939 to 1987, when the Federal Communications Commission struck down the Fairness Doctrine on its own, there was virtually nothing like what has come to be known left, right and center as American talk radio today. In fact, it is almost inarguable that the dynamic forum that has emerged as talk radio today virtually began with the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987.

So the first part of this debate, Mr. Speaker, is we don't need to wonder what American broadcast radio would look like if the Fairness Doctrine were re-imposed. We have four decades of experience. We know precisely what the public airwaves would look like if we returned to this arcane rule of content regulation.

Truthfully, I think the most likely outcome is not that radio stations that carry Rush Limbaugh would also carry Alan Colmes. The reality is, faced with recordkeeping, red tape, potential legal fees that would attach to a Fairness Doctrine challenge filed with the FCC, and potential loss of their license, most of the 2,000 radio stations today that carry talk radio simply wouldn't carry it any more.

Now why do I know this? Let me be a little bit autobiographical for a second, Mr. Speaker. Before I was elected to Congress in the year 2000, I made a living in radio. I had a call-in talk radio show heard exclusively in Indiana. It was carried on 20 different radio stations, from 9 a.m. to noon. I tell people sometimes I was Rush Limbaugh on decaf. I was conservative, but wasn't in a bad mood about it. We had all different sides on. But I would bring my cheerful conservative perspective to bear across the airways of heartland Indiana every day.

Mr. Speaker, I started in radio in little old, no pun intended, Rushville, Indiana, in 1989, a little tiny show that aired from 6 to 6:30 p.m. That gave rise to a weekend show, and that gave rise to a daily show, and then I was in syndicated radio for the better part of 7 years. It was a blast. I enjoyed it. When the opportunity came for me to go into public service, I was torn because I so enjoyed the opportunity to get in front of that microphone and talk to Hoosiers every day about the things that were important to them and share my philosophy of government.

My wife and I ultimately felt a calling in our life to public service. We stepped forward. I never looked back. But I lived in the business for a long time. I spent a lot of time driving around to little radio stations across Indiana and dropping off tapes to station managers and asking them if they would carry what we conveniently entitled "The Mike Pence Show."

So I know these radio station owners, and I know that a lot of them run these stations on a shoestring. The reality is, and the reason why, when the Fairness Doctrine was in effect, there were 200 talk radio stations in America, and after the Fairness Doctrine was repealed, there are now 2,000 talk radio

stations in America, is because, quite frankly, when the Fairness Doctrine was in effect, most radio stations just said we can't deal with the controversy, the recordkeeping, the making sure that we live up to Federal regulations. For heaven's sake, we can't live with the risk that somebody would file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission and we would possibly lose our license.

I saw in the years immediately following the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine radio station owners beginning to awaken to the fact that they could put commentators on the airwaves and enjoy freedom and let nothing other than the marketplace itself choose who was going to succeed on their radio station. As my friend, the former majority leader, Dick Armey, loves to say often, and I give him credit for the phrase, freedom works.

The truth is, after the Reagan administration struck down the Fairness Doctrine, we saw an explosion of talk radio. Frankly, most of the talk shows that have succeeded on a national level reflect a center right philosophical perspective. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that in many of the largest markets around the country, some of the most popular talk show hosts are self-described liberals, or progressives and I say more power to them.

The truth is that the reality of American talk radio today is as diverse as the American people. And yet, and now I shift on the reason for the Broadcaster Freedom Act and the reason for us taking the extraordinary measure of filing a discharge petition on the floor of the Congress, I say with a heavy heart that some on Capitol Hill are calling for a return of the Fairness Doctrine to the airwaves of America.

Mr. Speaker, I will offer some quotes, with great respect to colleagues in this Chamber and the next. Senator RICHARD DURBIN said, as quoted in *The Hill* on June 27: "It's time to reinstitute the Fairness Doctrine." The Senate majority whip, DICK DURBIN of Illinois, went on to say: "I have this old-fashioned attitude that when Americans hear both sides of the story, they are in a better position to make a decision."

Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN told the same publication that she is, in fact, "looking at" reviving the Fairness Doctrine. She told Fox News on Sunday, June 24, that she was reviewing the Fairness Doctrine "because talk radio is overwhelmingly one way," in her words. Senator JOHN KERRY, the former Democratic nominee for President of the United States, and easily one of the most respected and powerful Members of the United States Senate, told the Brian Lehrer radio show on June 26: "I think the Fairness Doctrine ought to be there. I also think the Equal Time Doctrine ought to come back." He went on to say: "I mean, these are the people who wiped out one of the most profound changes in the balance of the media, is when conservatives got rid of the equal time require-

ments. And the result is that, you know, they have been able to squeeze down, squeeze out opinions of opposing views, and I think it's been an imposing transition in the imbalance of our public."

Mr. Speaker, three of the most powerful Members of the United States Senate this summer, in the wake of the collapse of the amnesty bill that the Senate was attempting to move, expressed with frustration the need to return Federal regulation of the airwaves of America. American Spectator recently reported that according to two Members of the House Democratic Caucus, Speaker NANCY PELOSI and STENY HOYER, they will "aggressively pursue reinstatement of the so-called Fairness Doctrine over the next six months." That was reported on May 14.

When I brought an amendment to the floor this summer that would just buy a 1-year moratorium to the re-imposition of the Fairness Doctrine, while 107 of my Democratic colleagues voted with us, none of the Democratic leadership or any of the leadership of the powerful committees of jurisdiction voted with us to prevent the Fairness Doctrine from returning.

Mr. Speaker, there are other examples of distinguished colleagues who have every right to hold the views they hold. I do not question their integrity or their sincerity; I just disagree with them vigorously. I do not accept the conclusion of the Center for American Progress, run by the former chief of staff of the Clinton administration, John Podesta, one of the most highly regarded thinkers in the modern Democratic Party today, runs a think tank. That group published an extensive cross-tabulated report this summer from their Center for American Progress entitled: "The Structural Imbalance of American Talk Radio." While their proposal did not specifically call for the Fairness Doctrine, frankly, it called for much worse. It called for a whole new range of regulations involving ownership and consent on the airwaves of America.

So before anyone dismisses our efforts in trying to bring the Broadcaster Freedom Act to the floor of the House of Representatives as just more politics, let me say that I believe that it is imperative that the American people know that the next President of the United States, whoever he or she might be, could reinstate the Fairness Doctrine without an act of Congress unless we pass the Broadcaster Freedom Act.

Now, let me get to the legislation and make a few other comments about our extraordinary measure in the discharge petition that we filed this week. The legislation itself is very simple. The Broadcaster Freedom Act, which I introduced with Congressman GREG WALDEN that is cosponsored by every single Republican Member of the House of Representatives, and one Democrat, I am very happy and proud to say, a formal journalist himself, Congressman JOHN YARMUTH of Kentucky, the

Broadcaster Freedom Act simply says this, Mr. Speaker: it says that the Congress takes away from the FCC the power to re-impose the Fairness Doctrine without an act of Congress.

Now why is that necessary? Well, I hasten to remind my colleagues and anyone looking in that the FCC did away with the Fairness Doctrine in 1987. They were doing away with a regulation that they created. Therefore, if the FCC were to change its mind, it could bring back the Fairness Doctrine without ever consulting the Congress. The truth is, the next President of the United States is, whoever he or she might be, were they sympathetic to the opinions expressed by Senator RICHARD DURBIN, Senator JOHN KERRY, and others that we need to re-impose the Fairness Doctrine, re-impose provisions of regulations like equal time and other things, that President, whoever he or she might be, could make virtually one appointment to the FCC and restore the Fairness Doctrine like that. I think the American people have a right to know that. The Broadcaster Freedom Act essentially says we are taking that power away from the FCC to re-impose the Fairness Doctrine. It's just that simple and no more complex than that.

Mr. Speaker, why do we need to do this? Then I will talk a little bit about what we are doing tactically and strategically to get an up-or-down vote. The reason we are doing it, I think, frankly, is because who's against fairness? I have to tell you that I was not terribly surprised when a recent national poll done by the Rasmussen polling firm found that 41 percent of those surveyed said they would be willing to require radio and TV stations to offer equal amounts of conservative and liberal commentary, and only 41 percent said they opposed.

So literally the American people, as we stand today, having not had this national debate, are fairly evenly divided on what I believe amounts to censorship of the airwaves of America. But, again, it's because of that pernicious word "fairness." We have seen an entire cable television network built on the catch phrase "fair and balanced." Yet, as I said at the outset of my remarks on the House floor today, there is nothing fair about the Fairness Doctrine. The reality is that were we to bring back this archaic rule to the airwaves of America, we would see talk radio as we know it either greatly diminished or essentially vanish from the American political debate.

So the Broadcaster Freedom Act I think is an effort to run to the sound of the guns on behalf of freedom. I hope that my colleagues who know me well know that I bring the same sincerity of purpose to this mission as I brought to the legislation that I coauthored that we passed this week to create a qualified privilege for reporters in the Free Flow of Information Act. To me, it's all about that constitutional principle of a free and independent press.

Mr. Speaker, while I will say that despite the fact that the Broadcaster

Freedom Act is cosponsored by 203 Members of Congress, despite the fact that the principles of broadcast freedom that were enshrined in the Pence amendment this summer that essentially created a 1-year ban on re-imposing the Fairness Doctrine passed by 309 votes, we are yet to see any action either at the committee level or on the floor calendar for consideration of the Broadcaster Freedom Act.

□ 1445

And I want to tell you, and I will talk a little technical here, Mr. Speaker, I am a regular order kind of a guy. I like legislation to go through subcommittees and committees and have hearings. I think the American people work their will when Congress is moving in the ordinary processes designed to vet and draft and redraft legislation.

And so it is an extraordinary thing for me to say that we ought to have a petition that brings the Broadcaster Freedom Act straight to the floor. In fact, in keeping with that principle, the rule that we wrote is an open rule. I would be more than willing to have several days of debate about broadcast freedom on the floor of this Congress. I would be more than willing to entertain as many amendments to the Broadcaster Freedom Act as Members wanted to propose. This is not an effort to silence the debate; it is an effort to have a debate about the freedom of American commentators on the public airwaves of America to engage in speech in a manner consistent with the first amendment.

And so this week, as I have been alluding, I along with now, I believe, the count this afternoon is about 140 Members of Congress, including all of the Republican leadership, we filed what is called a discharge petition that, if it is signed by 218 Members of Congress, will bring the Broadcaster Freedom Act to the floor of the Congress for an up-or-down vote.

While I would hope that my colleagues in the Democrat majority, while I would hope that the distinguished Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, might even be looking in on my remarks today and may ultimately decide MIKE is right, we ought to have a debate and a vote on the Broadcaster Freedom Act and the discharge petition would not be necessary, I am getting the impression that is not likely to happen.

And so we have taken an extraordinary measure, and as I said, I, along with the Republican leader, JOHN BOEHNER, the Republican whip, ROY BLUNT, conference chairman, ADAM SMITH, and others are now calling on our colleagues in a spirit of good will to say: Give us an up-or-down vote on the Broadcaster Freedom Act on the floor of the House of Representatives, because I want to make a very bold statement about this legislation. And having just seen legislation that I co-authored get 398 votes on the House floor Tuesday, I hope people don't

think that I am talking through my hat.

I want to say with confidence that if the Broadcaster Freedom Act was brought to the floor of the House of Representatives, I believe it would pass overwhelmingly, because every time freedom gets an up-or-down vote on the floor of Congress, freedom wins.

I go back to this summer, as I said, I introduced an amendment, the Pence amendment to the appropriations bill that funded the FCC. I didn't know how it would do. I introduced the amendment to deny any funding to the FCC in the next year to bring back the Fairness Doctrine. It was a way of starting this conversation. My gosh, it passed; 309 Members of Congress voted for the Pence amendment. It was overwhelming, including 107 backbench Members of the Democratic majority. I am sincerely grateful for that, but that was a 1-year moratorium.

The truth is we have a Presidential election just around the corner. We will have a new administration in Washington, DC, and many of the leaders of the Democratic Party on Capitol Hill are calling for a return of the Fairness Doctrine, so now is the time for us to permanently do what 309 Members of Congress voted to do for a year, and that is to ensure the ongoing freedom of the airwaves of America by passing the Broadcaster Freedom Act.

Again, I want to say I am absolutely positive it would win, and I am positive it would have an overwhelming bipartisan vote because, as we learned this week with the Free Flow of Information Act, every time freedom gets a vote on the floor of the people's House, freedom wins.

Let me close, and I notice from the clock it is coming up on the time for me to give a tour to 100 eighth graders from Dearborn County, Indiana, and I can't be late for that. But let me say, bringing back the Fairness Doctrine would amount to government control over political views expressed on the public airwaves. Plain and simple.

I say with great respect to those who think we ought to return to those 4 decades where the Federal Government thought it was its role to regulate the debate that took place on the airwaves of radio and television, I say with great respect to them, I think there is a great danger when we unleash the power of the Federal Government to corral, to organize, to minimize or categorize or prioritize the American political debate. It is the essence of my belief that as messy as freedom is, it is the freedom of the American people that has created the most powerful and the most prosperous Nation in the history of the world.

I really believe with all my heart that at the end of the day, that as messy and as painful as it sometimes is for those of us in positions of public power, that the very well-being of the Nation is tied up in those of us in this body standing for the freedoms enshrined in the first amendment.

I was asked by a reporter yesterday at a press conference, Mr. Speaker: What if all of talk radio, monolithically talk radio reflected a liberal world view, would you still be doing this?

And I stepped to the microphone confidently and I said: Well, let me tell you, a lot of people think a lot of the national news media is fairly liberal. And I agree. An awful lot of the people that report on the network national news and some of the leading newspapers in America are quite liberal in their viewpoints.

Mr. Speaker, that didn't stop me from coauthoring the Free Flow of Information Act to protect the right of reporters in the electronic news media and the print media to keep sources confidential. And I appeal to my colleagues, men and women of good will all, who voted with us this summer for broadcast freedom, to join us again and sign this discharge petition.

I said on the House floor yesterday, if you support broadcast freedom, sign the petition. If you oppose the Fairness Doctrine and the archaic notion of the Federal Communications Commission regulating the airwaves of America as it did for 4 decades, sign the petition. I said if you cherish the dynamic national asset, left, right, and center that has become American talk radio since 1987, sign the petition. And ultimately, if you don't agree with any one of those positions but you just think that broadcast freedom ought to get an up-or-down vote on the House floor, I say to my colleagues, sign the petition because it is imperative to me, and the American people understand, that if 218 Members of this body sign that piece of paper, we will get an up-or-down vote on the Broadcaster Freedom Act, and I am positive we will send the Fairness Doctrine to the ash heap of broadcast history where it belongs.

I have every confidence that Republicans and Democrats in overwhelming numbers will reject the Fairness Doctrine, will adopt the Broadcaster Freedom Act, and we will be able, like we did on Tuesday of this week, to know that we set aside politics and we stood together as a Nation behind that blood-bought freedom of speech and freedom of the press that is enshrined in the first amendment.

Lastly, let me quote President John F. Kennedy, who was a boyhood hero of mine. When I first became involved in politics, it may surprise some of my colleagues to know that I was the Youth Democrat Party Coordinator in Bartholemew County, Indiana. I am probably the only Republican in Congress who has a bust of John F. Kennedy in my campaign headquarters. But as a fellow second generation Irish American, I still find him a deeply inspirational figure.

It seems to me John F. Kennedy expressed some words that speak to our time about this debate. He said: "We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign

ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people."

Let me say that one more time because it literally could be a part of this debate over the Fairness Doctrine today. President John F. Kennedy said: "We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values." Let me stop there.

You listen to talk radio today, it is almost as if John F. Kennedy had listened to it. There are an awful lot of unpleasant facts for people in power that get mentioned on talk radio. A lot of foreign ideas. Occasionally some downright alien philosophies. If you listen to late-night talk radio, there are sometimes literally alien philosophies, and there certainly are competitive values.

But John F. Kennedy went on to say: "A nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people."

You know, America is a Nation of freedom and strong opinion, and our government must not be afraid to entrust our good people with all the facts and all the opinions necessary to make choices as an informed electorate. That is what democracy is all about. Now, is it comfortable for men and women in power who work in this rarified air of this marble building, no. But is it freedom? Is it what our Founders intended when they enshrined a free and independent press in the first amendment of the Constitution? You bet it is. I mean to tell you, our Founders did not enshrine the freedom of the press in the first amendment because they got good press. Our Founders enshrined the freedom of the press in the first amendment of the Constitution because they understood that a free and independent press is the only check on government power in real-time. And our Founders whose faces, some of which are chiseled into the wall or painted on canvases in this Chamber, believed in limited government and they believed in holding people like me and the other 434 Members of Congress who work in this Chamber accountable to a free and vigorous debate among the American people.

So I just come to the floor today to say thank you to my colleagues, thank you for standing for a free and independent press this week in the Free Flow of Information Act. I am deeply humbled and grateful for the work of my coauthor and colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BOUCHER) as we passed the first Federal legislation protecting a reporter's right to keep a source confidential in American history. It passed the House this week. It passed by 398 votes.

I also want to thank my colleagues who stood with me this summer against broadcast censorship, voting

for my amendment to ban the Fairness Doctrine for 1 year, 309 Members, 107 Democrats in the Congress joined us, and I thank them for that.

I want to thank the 203 colleagues, all of the Republicans and one Democrat, who have cosponsored the Broadcaster Freedom Act that would send the Fairness Doctrine to the ash heap of broadcast history forever.

Now I want to close on this last legislative day of the week with a challenge.

□ 1500

I want to challenge my colleagues to sign the petition that's at the counter to bring the Broadcaster Freedom Act to the floor of the Congress for an up-or-down vote; and I say again, Mr. Speaker, to you and to my colleagues and to anyone who might be looking in, if 218 Members of Congress sign the discharge petition for the Broadcaster Freedom Act, we will bring this legislation to the floor of the Congress and it will pass.

I say that having been through literally thousands of votes on this House floor, many of which I didn't know the outcome before I showed up, some of which I had to wait a long time for the outcome, longer than I should have. But this one I say with confidence and with humility and with gratitude, if the Broadcaster Freedom Act that would do away forever with the Fairness Doctrine comes to the floor of the House of Representatives, it will pass with bipartisan support because freedom is not a partisan issue on the floor of the Congress.

I believe we proved this Tuesday with the Free Flow of Information Act what we will prove the day the Broadcaster Freedom Act comes to this floor, that every time freedom gets an up-or-down vote in the House of Representatives, freedom wins.

So I urge my colleagues, but especially those who supported broadcast freedom earlier this year, sign the discharge petition for H.R. 2905 and bring the Broadcaster Freedom Act to the floor of the Congress; 218 Member signatures will make it possible for the American people to have their say and send the Fairness Doctrine forever to the ash heap of broadcast history where it belongs.

Let's bring the Broadcaster Freedom Act to the floor. Let's let freedom reign, and let's do it together as we did this Tuesday, Republicans and Democrats, standing for the freedoms enshrined in the first amendment, the freedom of the press, the freedom of speech, the Broadcaster Freedom Act.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it's an honor to be before the House once again.

As you know, the 30-something Working Group, we come to the floor maybe once, twice, three times, if we can, a week to not only share with the Members the good things that we are doing but also some things that we are going to have to work together on, bills that we're going to have to work together on on behalf of America.

We've been able to do quite a bit this session, Mr. Speaker, and accomplish a lot in this first session. We have had record-breaking roll call votes never taken before. I think it's somewhere around 980 votes, I mean, not even counting the votes today, that have been taken here in the House that have never been taken in the history of the Republic, since the mid-70s. I believe it was 1975 or 1974 that held the record for roll call votes, and this year is not over yet, and we still have a lot of business to conduct.

I can't help but, Mr. Speaker, come to the floor and talk a little bit about what happened with the children's health care bill. I know just an hour ago we voted to override the President of the United States, and that's something that the Congress has the opportunity to do. The President decided to veto the children's health care bill. The Congress said that we would override. The Senate had the votes but the House, we weren't able to do it today. It wasn't because of Democratic Members of Congress, why we weren't able to override, and it wasn't because of 44 Republicans who voted with Democrats to override the President. It was 154 Republicans who decided to stand with the President and not voting for the override.

Now, we fell 13 votes short. What does that mean? I'm not here today to start calling names and pointing fingers, but I'm here today to make sure that the Members know that the good thing about America is that you have the second chance to do the right thing, and the Members had a second chance to do the right thing and failed to do so. The 13 Members or so failed to do so because they voted against the original bill that came before us that the President vetoed, but on the override they had the opportunity to say the right thing, and they didn't do it.

And within that 154 or within that 13, I just want to identify some of the States that will not receive health care or children's health care from the CHIP bill.

In California, 1.8 million kids have been denied health care. State of Florida, my very State, my State that I represent, those Members that voted, the 13 we fell short, voted against 616,000 kids. In Georgia, 467,000 for those Members that voted against the SCHIP bill override. Illinois, 435,000; Indiana, 199,000. And I'm just using round numbers here, Mr. Speaker. Iowa, 72,962; Kentucky, 112,000 will be denied health care because Members of the other side, 13 Republicans, said we needed to be able to close the gap, did not vote with us today to override the