

*The Indianapolis Star* [has an editorial out today](#) describing the need for a [federal media shield](#), because no matter how dire the times may be, there should never be an appropriate juncture at which to suspend the American people's right to a free and independent press - the only check on government power in real-time.

Contrary to alarmist depictions by their critics, shield laws are far from absolute. The one awaiting action in Congress after the August recess is no exception. It specifically allows for disclosure of sources when a court has determined that national security is indeed at stake. And in the way of allaying another purported fear, it defines "journalist" as a working news-gatherer, not someone making frivolous or malicious forays into public business under the false cloak of the profession.

Championed by two Hoosier Republicans, Rep. Mike Pence and Sen. Richard Lugar, the Free Flow of Information Act passed resoundingly in the House and ran into a filibuster in the Senate, nine votes short of the 60 needed to bring it to the floor.

Breaking the stalemate will not be easy. Saying no to the executive branch in a time of war is not to be done lightly; but neither is the vital role of the free press to be taken for granted. Legislation that asks government to get a court order before criminalizing a citizen who carries a notebook is difficult to characterize as extreme. Jailing journalists, or making them fear jail if they encourage whistleblowers, is impossible to reconcile with the First Amendment.