



Pence on point in adoption of free press act

PRESIDENT Barack Obama has signed a law intended to provide more protections for a free press around the world.

The law, the Daniel Pearl Freedom of Press Act, expands efforts to identify countries where press freedom is being violated. The law is named after Pearl, a Wall Street Journal reporter who was beheaded by militants in Pakistan in 2002.

The law expands an annual report on human rights practices to include information about media treatment and identify countries where the media is being repressed. Obama said the law would be a signal to governments around the world that their actions, including treatment of the media, are being watched.

A free and vigorous press is a cornerstone of democracy. It can act as a check on governments by monitoring and, when necessary, exposing their actions.

One of the co-authors of the bill was Columbus native Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., who represents a portion of Bartholomew County. In a statement about the bill, Pence said: "In every corner of the globe, journalists like Daniel Pearl are being silenced by intimidation, imprisonment or murder as they seek to bring to light information in the public interest.

"With the enactment of this legislation, we remember Daniel Pearl and all those correspondents, reporters and bloggers on the front lines of freedom. However, this law is not merely a tribute in his memory; rather, the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act will result in a concerted effort to highlight and promote freedom of the press by including such reports in the State Department's Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

"As a conservative who believes in the principle of limited government that served as a founding principle for this republic, I believe the only check on government power in real time is a free and independent press. The Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act will encourage the free flow of information to the public by spotlighting abuses and serve as a vital check on governments that impede the development of a free and independent press.

“Defending the worldwide freedom of the press is a noble task worthy of the significant bipartisan efforts that were required to make this legislation the law of the land. Through the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, the United States of America will continue to hold the torch of liberty high and shine light into every dark corner of the globe.”

Pence has been a consistent champion of a free press. We commend him for that record and specifically for his efforts to get the Pearl measure passed.