

*"Ensuring The Vitality Of A Free And Independent Press Is More Important Than Ever"*

**Washington,**                      **Apr 1** - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence gave the following speech from the floor of the U.S. House in favor of the Free



Congressman Pence,  
speaking in support of the  
Free Flow of Information  
Act of 2009

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Flow of Information Act (H.R. 985), which he authored. The legislation, also known as a federal media shield bill, was passed unanimously by the House and now awaits Senate action. The legislation, also known as a federal media shield bill, was passed unanimously by the House and now awaits Senate action.

**"Madam Speaker, I come to the floor today in support of the Free Flow of Information Act of 2009. I do so with a profound sense of humility and with a sense of privilege about being able to come to the floor today in support of this thoughtful and bipartisan measure that may well be a lasting contribution to the vitality of liberty in this nation.**

**"The Constitution of the United States provides: 'Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.' Not since those words were adopted has this body needed to legislate to ensure the freedom of the press-not until today.**

**"We do so because sadly, the free and independent press in this country is under fire. In recent years more than 30 journalists have been subpoenaed, questioned or held in contempt for failure to reveal their confidential sources. For a journalist, maintaining the 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 restricts the free flow of information to the public.**

**"As a conservative who believes in 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 let me say, during a time when the role of government in our lives and in our enterprises seems to grow every day, ensuring the vitality of a free and independent press is more important than ever.**

**"In order to maintain this charge, I co-authored the Free Flow of Information Act with my cherished colleague from Virginia, Congressman Rick Boucher. I'd like to take a moment to thank my partner in this legislation; he's truly the 'gentleman from Virginia.' For over four years, we've worked on this issue in a spirit of bipartisanship. Rick Boucher is a champion of the First Amendment, and it's been my great privilege to work with him. I also want to commend the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Chairman Conyers, Vice Ranking Member Bob Goodlatte, and Representatives Coble and Blunt, without whose efforts in the last Congress, the bipartisan compromise in this bill would not have been possible.**

**"The bill is known as the federal media shield. It provides a qualified privilege of confidential sources to journalists, enabling them to shield sources in most instances from disclosure. But the bill is not about protecting journalists, it's about protecting the public's right to know.**

**"It received such wide bipartisan support in the last Congress-and I hope in this one-because we addressed the very real and legitimate concerns about how a privilege for journalists could impact security at the national level. The federal government, we acknowledge, is tasked with the tremendous responsibility of protecting our country, and we must also keep national security concerns in the forefront. I submit the Free Flow of Information Act does just that.**

**"Many Americans will assume that the fining and imprisonment of journalists is something confined to tyrannical regimes in far corners of the world. They might be surprised to learn that the United States does not have a federal law on the books that prevents that from occurring. More than three-fourths of state attorneys general have written Congress in support of this legislation. In fact, forty-nine states and the District of Columbia have already recognized a journalist's privilege to protect confidential sources.**

It is important to emphasize this bill only provides a qualified privilege, meaning the disclosure of a source's identity may be required in certain situations, as described by my colleague from Virginia.

"With this I close: 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 ring into this chamber today, and passage of the Free Flow of Information Act-I believe-is necessary and consistent with that charge, to not only explicitly, but fully provide for the freedom of press in our nation, and protect the liberty of future generations. With the bipartisan support of my colleagues in Congress and this new Administration, let us seize this opportunity to put a stitch in this tear in the First Amendment freedom of the press, and let us do our part to ensure the vitality of a free and independent press for ourselves and our posterity."