

"I urge this Congress to stand in solidarity with those on the front lines of the worldwide fight for freedom of the press"

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence gave the following speech from the floor of the U.S. House during consideration of H.R. 3714, the "Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act," a bill he co-authored with Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA) to highlight and promote freedom of the press:

"Today I rise in support of H.R. 3714, the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, and I do so with a profound sense of privilege and gratitude to those who have gone before me on the floor today. To Chairman Berman of California, to the ranking member, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen of Florida: your partnership on behalf of a free and independent press on the world stage should be an inspiration to every American looking on these proceedings.

"I especially want to express my appreciation for the visionary leadership of Congressman Adam Schiff, who brought this legislation and who invited us to partner in his vision for expanding the awareness of the people of the United States and the people of the world for the repression of the free press. Congressman Schiff and I were elected in the same year; we have undoubtedly followed different paths and usually voted differently on things. We occasionally disagree but we always agree on freedom and a free and independent press, and I commend the gentleman from California for his singular leadership on this issue and the privilege of working with him.

"It is altogether fitting, as the gentle lady referred earlier, that I should do so not only during this debate but also in anticipation of the debate of the next piece of legislation: a bipartisan measure known as the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, to specifically point out the abuses of the regime in Iran and express my strong support for H.R. 2194 as well, in the midst of this debate.

"The reason why the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act has broad, bipartisan support-and that will be reflected on the floor this day-is, among other reasons, the support for terrorism by Iran, the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, the deception of the world community again and again, but to the point of this debate: it is also

imperative that the people of the United States of America send a message to Iran that the aggressive repression of a free press in Iran will not be tolerated in the form of normal relations with the United States of America, either diplomatically or economically.

"At this point, the Committee to Protect Journalists reports there are some 23 journalists in prison in Iran. Last week, we received word that another opposition newspaper was closed in Iran; and of course the world watched in horror in the aftermath of the blatantly fraudulent elections of this past June in Iran, as not only did the secret police stream into the streets to silence-oftentimes by billy club and violence-the dissidents, but we also watched in horror as the internet was silenced as YouTube videos were cut off, as access to the free flow of information was stymied by the brutality of the regime in Iran.

"And so I endorse the legislation that will be brought to the floor, but I see a nexus here between the two, and can't help but reference it.

"The legislation that Congressman Schiff and I have brought to the floor will serve two purposes.

"Number one, it will remember the extraordinary sacrifice and courage of one Daniel Pearl, kidnapped and murdered by terrorists in Karachi, Pakistan, just four months after the attacks of September 11, 2001. He was serving as the South Asia Bureau Chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, and at the time was based in Mumbai, India. He went to Pakistan as part of an investigation into the alleged links between Richard Reid, the convicted would-be shoe bomber of American Airlines Flight 63, and Al Qaeda and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. Tragically, Mr. Pearl was brutally executed by his captors.

"The legislation today is named in his memory and I hope his family may well be looking on today and know that his memory, his courage, and his example of what it means to advance the practice of journalism on the world stage will never be forgotten in this body.

"But the legislation today is not simply a tribute. The Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act also will result in an 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 we consider this legislation, as we remember Daniel Pearl's legacy, we think of the stories of so many others on the front lines of freedom. Gustavo Azocar is a political talk show host, newspaper correspondent and blogger in Venezuela. He's a vocal critic of Hugo Chavez. Azocar was jailed in 2009 after posting information about his court case online. Amnesty International's 2009 "Report on Human Rights in Venezuela" noted the physical attacks and imprisonment of journalists by this corrupt and despotic regime in Venezuela.

"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. I don't believe our Founders put the First Amendment freedom of the press in our Bill of Rights because they got good press; I believe it's because they believe in limited government and the need to constrain consolidations of power. A free and independent press ensures the free flow of information to the public, it serves as a vital check on such abuses. During a time when the role of government in our lives and our enterprises here at home seems to grow every day, taking a stand today for the principle of a free press not only at home, but making the means available to hold the lamp of liberty high and shine it deep into the crevices of this world to expose abuses of the freedom of the press is a noble task indeed.

"So I rise today in support of this legislation. I commend Chairman Berman, and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen for their bipartisan leadership. I commend the gentleman from California, Congressman Adam Schiff, for his visionary leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor.

"And more importantly than that, I salute the bravery of reporters like Daniel Pearl and Gustavo Azocar, and press outlets around the world who, day in and day out, stand in the gap-oftentimes risking their liberty, and in the case of Daniel Pearl, in fact risking his life to do the work of a free and independent press in the world. I urge those in that service to stand firm and to take heart, and to know that those of us in public life, those of us in public service, also understand that those who serve in the world of journalism are also in the business of public service.

"I urge this Congress to stand in solidarity with those on the front lines of the worldwide fight for the freedom of the press. And I urge support for the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, and the legislation that will follow.

"Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time."