



May 1, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SENATE PASSES BIPARTISAN RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Washington, D.C. – In honor of World Press Freedom Day on Sunday, May 3rd, the U.S. Senate has passed a resolution recognizing the threats to freedom of the press around the world and reaffirming the United States' commitment to promoting this essential right globally. The resolution, S.Res.124, introduced by Senators Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Ted Kaufman (D-DE), Richard Lugar (R-IN), John Kerry (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Robert Casey (D-PA), Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Joe Lieberman (ID-CT), passed the Senate unanimously. The resolution celebrates the fundamental right of freedom of the press, commends journalists around the world for their work holding government accountable and strengthening civil society and pays tribute to those journalists who lost their lives in the line of duty. The resolution also condemns actions around the world to suppress the freedom of the press and calls for the U.S. government to develop a system to more rapidly identify, publicize and respond to threats against press freedom worldwide.

“As we mark World Press Freedom Day, many courageous journalists continue to work under tremendously difficult conditions, often at great personal risk, with some paying the ultimate price for their journalistic pursuits,” said **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin**. Citing the upcoming fifth anniversary of the slaying of American journalist Paul Klebnikov in Moscow, Cardin called upon the Russian authorities to “bring to justice all of those responsible in any way for his murder.”

“In the United States, a free press has always been a core tenet of our society and essential to the strength of our democracy,” **Feingold said**. “A free society depends on a free press, and it is our duty to promote and protect this freedom around the world.”

“As long as corruption exists around the world -- whether in business or government -- a free press is central to uncovering the networks of misconduct,” said **Sen. Kaufman**. “The right to a free press is an essential component of governance that we cannot afford to leave unguarded.”

“A free press holds powerful people and big institutions accountable, and gives voice to people and interests who might never be heard, and that is a sacred freedom that should be protected and spread around the globe,” said **Sen. Kerry**.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said, “As we celebrate *World Press Freedom Day*, we are reminded that an open and accountable society comes with the duty of its citizens to seek out the

truth and to empower themselves with that knowledge. All of us – whether Republican, Democrat or Independent – have an interest in preserving press freedoms and protecting the public’s right to know.”

Senator Casey said, “Thomas Jefferson rightly declared that ‘the only security of all is a free press.’ Freedom of the press is imperative for the function of a healthy, responsive democracy, and it is important for all of us to work to ensure that a free press is enjoyed the world over.”

“A free press is one of the foundations of American democracy, and attempts to suppress those who seek to hold any government accountable is wrong,” **Isakson** said. “Open government is vital to a healthy democracy.”

Senator Menendez said, “A free press is an integral part of a free nation – it helps shine a light on the good and bad in society and helps keep our leaders accountable. Just 90 miles off of our shore, the Cuban people are denied their basic right to know what’s going on in their country and around the world, and that is a main reason they have lived under an iron fist for 50 years. By supporting the freedom of the press worldwide, we help advance the cause of liberty.”

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed May 3rd of each year as World Press Freedom Day. According to the International Federation of Journalists, in 2008, 109 reporters and other news media workers were killed while on assignment. According to Reporters Without Borders, an international non-governmental organization, 673 reporters were arrested, 929 were physically attacked or threatened and 29 journalists were kidnapped in 2008.

For more information, visit Committee to Protect Journalists at www.cpj.org.

Contact: Sue Walitsky (Cardin) – (202) 224-4524

Zach Lowe (Feingold) – (202) 224-8657

Alexander Snyder-Mackler (Kaufman) – (202) 224-5042

Mark Helmke (Lugar) – (202) 224-5918

Jodi Seth (Kerry) – (202) 224-4159

Erica Chabot (Leahy) – (202) 224-2154

Larry Smar (Case) – (202) 228-6367

Sheridan Watson (Isakson) – (202) 224-7777

Menendez Press Office – (202) 224-4744

Max Gleischman (Durbin) – (202) 228-5244

##