

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To establish the Office of Press Freedom, to create press freedom curriculum at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. OSSOFF, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. WYDEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To establish the Office of Press Freedom, to create press freedom curriculum at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Global Press Freedom
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) Freedom of the press is fundamental to an
9 open and free society and is foundational in the

1 United States’ democratic system and enshrined in
2 the First Amendment of the United States Constitu-
3 tion, which states (in part) “Congress shall make no
4 law ... abridging the freedom of speech or of the
5 press ...”.

6 (2) Historically, United States foreign policy
7 has advanced freedom of the press as a central
8 tenet, at home and abroad.

9 (3) The United States led the drafting of the
10 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in
11 Paris on December 10, 1948, which enshrines the
12 commitment of countries around the world to protect
13 and promote universal human rights and values that
14 are indispensable for human dignity, including free-
15 dom of expression.

16 (4) Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of
17 Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to
18 freedom of opinion and expression; this right in-
19 cludes freedom to hold opinions without interference
20 and to seek, receive and impart information and
21 ideas through any media and regardless of fron-
22 tiers.”.

23 (5) A free and independent press has long been
24 recognized as an important aspect of the United
25 States’ national security and actions taken by for-

1 eign governments or organizations that weaken free
2 press protections are a national security threat to
3 the United States.

4 (6) International press freedom is under re-
5 newed and, in some cases, increasing assault, with
6 rhetoric delegitimizing and discrediting the media or
7 journalists, online harassment, physical attacks, gen-
8 der-based violence, legal campaigns, censorship, and
9 surveillance, all of which threaten the ability of jour-
10 nalists to do their jobs safely, freely, and without
11 fear of reprisal.

12 (7) In the past decade, the world has seen a
13 significant deterioration of press freedoms.

14 (8) According to Freedom House’s “Freedom in
15 the World” and “Freedom on the Net” reports—

16 (A) the number of countries and territories
17 scoring a zero for media freedom has ballooned
18 from 14 countries to 33 countries since 2005;
19 and

20 (B) people in 53 countries faced arrest or
21 imprisonment for expressing themselves online,
22 including online journalists targeted for their
23 reporting;

1 (C) 40 countries blocked websites featuring
2 political, social, or religious content, including
3 many news outlets; and

4 (D) journalists, bloggers, human rights ac-
5 tivists, and other people experienced physical vi-
6 olence in retaliation for expressing themselves
7 online in 40 countries.

8 (9) According to Reporters Without Borders'
9 2022 World Press Freedom Index—

10 (A) approximately 74 percent of the coun-
11 tries of the world are classified as “problematic
12 situation” or worse with respect to journalistic
13 freedom, with a record number of 28 countries
14 receiving a “very bad” rating for press freedom
15 situations;

16 (B) approximately 26 percent of the coun-
17 tries of the world have “satisfactory” or “good”
18 press freedom environments;

19 (C) among the jurisdictions that have re-
20 cently suffered the largest declines in press
21 freedom are Hong Kong, Myanmar, Afghani-
22 stan, Russia, Ukraine (attributable to Russia’s
23 invasion), Georgia, Greece, Nicaragua, the Pal-
24 estinian Territories, Tunisia, and Mali; and

1 (D) democracies are being weakened by the
2 asymmetry between open societies and despotic
3 regimes that control their media and online
4 platforms, while waging propaganda wars
5 against democracies.

6 (10) According to the Committee to Protect
7 Journalists, in 2022—

8 (A) at least 363 journalists worldwide were
9 in prison, a new record high and a 20 percent
10 increase from the 302 journalists in prison in
11 2021, with Iran, China, Myanmar, Turkey, and
12 Belarus all ranking among the top 5 jailers of
13 journalists;

14 (B) of the journalists detained—

15 (i) 131 journalists were detained with-
16 out charge;

17 (ii) 199 journalists were imprisoned
18 on anti-state charges; and

19 (iii) 354 detainees were local journal-
20 ists covering events in their own countries;

21 (C) at least 67 journalists and media work-
22 ers were killed, which is the highest number of
23 journalist killings since 2018 and almost a 50
24 percent increase from the number of journalists
25 killed during 2021;

1 (D) at least 41 journalists and media
2 workers were killed in direct connection with
3 their work; and

4 (E) there was complete impunity in nearly
5 80 percent of the 263 cases of journalists mur-
6 dered in the last decade, with perpetrators fac-
7 ing no judicial consequences.

8 (11) Congress has recognized the importance of
9 freedom of the press by enacting—

10 (A) the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press
11 Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–166);

12 (B) the Global Magnitsky Human Rights
13 Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of
14 Public Law 114–328); and

15 (C) S. Res. 501, 115th Congress (recog-
16 nizing threats to freedom of the press and ex-
17 pression around the world and reaffirming free-
18 dom of the press as a priority in efforts of the
19 Government of the United States to promote
20 democracy and good governance).

21 (12) The importance of freedom of the press
22 has been recognized by numerous United States
23 presidential administrations that span ideological
24 and party lines, including—

1 (A) a 1786 letter to James Currie, in
2 which Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson
3 wrote “our liberty depends on the freedom of
4 the press, and that cannot be limited without
5 being lost.”;

6 (B) an address to Congress on February 6,
7 1986, in which President Ronald Reagan stat-
8 ed, “Victories against poverty are greatest and
9 peace most secure where people live by laws
10 that ensure free press, free speech, and freedom
11 to worship, vote, and create wealth”;

12 (C) a statement by Secretary of State
13 Condoleezza Rice on April 11, 2007, stating
14 that “there is no more important pillar of de-
15 mocracy than a free and active press”;

16 (D) a statement by former Secretary of
17 State Madeline Albright on May 31, 2018, re-
18 porting that “Freedom of the press is a basic
19 aspect of democracy, invented by Americans.”;
20 and

21 (E) a statement by Secretary of State
22 Mike Pompeo on May 3, 2019, stating, “A free
23 and independent media is indispensable to a vi-
24 brant, functioning democracy. Despite some
25 progress, journalists around the world continue

1 to be persecuted, targeted with violence, or even
2 killed—all too often with impunity.”.

3 (13) Protection of a free and open press is not
4 a partisan issue.

5 (14) It is imperative that Congress further en-
6 shrine the Department of State’s role in protecting
7 international press freedom and those engaged in
8 journalism abroad.

9 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

10 It shall be the policy of the United States—

11 (1) to condemn attacks on press freedom and
12 threats to the safety of journalists;

13 (2) to promote, and to assist other governments
14 in the promotion of, the importance of a free and
15 open press;

16 (3) to support press freedom abroad in all as-
17 pects of American foreign policy; and

18 (4) to work with foreign governments that af-
19 firm and protect press freedom—

20 (A) to develop multilateral initiatives to
21 combat suppression of the free and independent
22 press; and

23 (B) to promote accountability for individ-
24 uals, governments, and other actors that attack

1 press freedoms and threaten the safety of jour-
2 nalists.

3 **SEC. 4. OFFICE OF PRESS FREEDOM; AMBASSADOR-AT-**
4 **LARGE FOR PRESS FREEDOM.**

5 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established, within
6 the Department of State, the Office of Press Freedom (re-
7 ferred to in this Act as the “Office”), which—

8 (1) shall be situated in the Bureau of Democ-
9 racy, Human Rights, and Labor; and

10 (2) shall be headed by the Ambassador-at-
11 Large for Press Freedom (referred to in this Act as
12 the “Ambassador”).

13 (b) APPOINTMENT.—The Ambassador shall be ap-
14 pointed by the President, by and with advice and consent
15 of the Senate, and shall work with the Assistant Secretary
16 of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to ad-
17 vise the Secretary of State regarding matters related to
18 press freedom.

19 (c) DUTIES.—The Ambassador shall have the fol-
20 lowing duties:

21 (1) GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES.—Notwith-
22 standing the active role carried out by local United
23 States Ambassadors in the monitoring of press free-
24 dom violations in their host countries, the Amba-
25 sador shall have the primary responsibility—

1 (A) to advance the protection and well-
2 being of members of the United States and for-
3 eign press abroad;

4 (B) to denounce attacks on press freedom
5 and violations of freedom of expression by for-
6 eign governments or other actors; and

7 (C) to engage with foreign governments
8 and press freedom organizations around the
9 world concerning press freedom and freedom of
10 expression.

11 (2) SPECIFIC TASKS.—The Ambassador, with
12 the assistance of the Office and in consultation with
13 the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy,
14 Human Rights, and Labor, and in fulfillment of the
15 responsibilities described in paragraph (1), shall—

16 (A) coordinate efforts between relevant
17 United States embassy personnel and press or-
18 ganizations or threatened individuals in situa-
19 tions in which press freedom is threatened
20 abroad;

21 (B) publicly and privately denounce op-
22 pression of the press abroad;

23 (C) represent the United States in issues
24 concerning press freedom in diplomatic engage-
25 ment with foreign governments, intergovern-

1 mental organizations, the United Nations, and
2 other international organizations in which the
3 United States is a member;

4 (D) recommend appropriate responses by
5 the United States Government when press free-
6 dom is infringed upon; and

7 (E) provide Congress and the public with
8 a regular report describing the successes and
9 enduring challenges of the Office, based on
10 metrics that the Office shall develop.

11 (3) ADVISORY ROLE.—The Ambassador—

12 (A) shall be a principal advisor to the
13 President and to the Secretary of State regard-
14 ing matters affecting press freedom abroad; and

15 (B) shall make recommendations regarding
16 the policies of the United States Government
17 towards governments or other organizations or
18 individuals that—

19 (i) infringe on press freedom; or

20 (ii) fail to ensure the protection of
21 members of the press.

22 (4) REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Am-
23 bassador shall—

1 (A) work with the staff of the Office to en-
2 sure the success of the Office in carrying out its
3 mission—

4 (i) to promote press freedom abroad;

5 and

6 (ii) to protect members of the press in
7 foreign countries;

8 (B) not later than 1 year after being ap-
9 pointed, ensure that there is a reasonable proc-
10 ess for measuring the efficacy of the Office in
11 carrying out the missions described in subpara-
12 graph (A);

13 (C) not later than 18 months after being
14 appointed, and annually thereafter—

15 (i) submit a report to Congress that
16 describes—

17 (I) the outcomes of the activities
18 of the Office based on the process es-
19 tablished pursuant to subparagraph
20 (B); and

21 (II) the efforts of the National
22 Foreign Affairs Training Center to
23 train Foreign Service Officers about
24 press freedom in accordance with sec-
25 tion 5; and

1 (ii) make a copy of the report sub-
2 mitted pursuant to clause (i) available to
3 the public; and

4 (D) oversee the press freedom content in
5 the “Freedom of Expression” section of each
6 country reviewed in the annual *Country Report*
7 *on Human Rights Practices*.

8 (5) FUNDING.—The Secretary of State shall
9 provide the Ambassador with sufficient funds—

10 (A) to hire the staff for the Office to en-
11 able the Office to carry out the tasks and re-
12 sponsibilities described in paragraphs (1), (2),
13 and (3);

14 (B) to comply with the reporting require-
15 ments described in paragraph (4); and

16 (C) for necessary travel to carry out this
17 section.

18 **SEC. 5. PRESS FREEDOM CURRICULUM.**

19 (a) DEVELOPMENT.—The Secretary of State shall
20 ensure that there is a press freedom curriculum for the
21 National Foreign Affairs Training Center that enables
22 Foreign Service Officers to better understand issues of
23 press freedom and the tools that are available to help pro-
24 tect journalists and promote freedom of the press norms,
25 including—

1 (1) the historic and current issues facing press
2 freedom, including countries of specific concern;

3 (2) the Department of State's role in promoting
4 press freedom as an American value, a human rights
5 issue, and a national security imperative;

6 (3) ways to incorporate press freedom pro-
7 motion into other aspects of diplomacy; and

8 (4) existing tools to assist journalists in distress
9 and methods for engaging foreign governments and
10 institutions on behalf of individuals engaged in jour-
11 nalistic activity who are at risk of harm.

12 (b) **REQUIRED STUDY.**—Any Foreign Service Officer
13 who is assigned to function as a Public Diplomacy Officer,
14 a Political Officer, or a Consular Officer at an overseas
15 mission shall—

16 (1) complete the study of the curriculum de-
17 scribed in subsection (a) not later than 90 days after
18 the first day of such assignment; and

19 (2) benefit from knowledge sharing by civil soci-
20 ety actors who are at the forefront of the defense
21 and promotion of the freedom of expression.

22 **SEC. 6. GAO STUDY ON THE DANIEL PEARL FREEDOM OF**
23 **THE PRESS ACT OF 2009.**

24 (a) **STUDY.**—The Comptroller General of the United
25 States shall evaluate the implementation of the Daniel

1 Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–
2 166) by reviewing the Department of State’s *Country Re-*
3 *ports on Human Rights Practices*, prepared in select years
4 and for select countries, to examine—

5 (1) the process used by the Department for pre-
6 paring information regarding the freedom of the
7 press for such reports and the extent to which such
8 process changed after the date of the enactment of
9 such Act;

10 (2) the extent to which the Department of State
11 followed the process referred to in paragraph (1) in
12 preparing information regarding press freedom that
13 was included in its most recently published *Country*
14 *Reports on Human Rights Practices*;

15 (3) any challenges encountered by the Depart-
16 ment of State in collecting, corroborating, and re-
17 porting the information described in sections
18 116(d)(12) and 502B(i) of the Foreign Assistance
19 Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n(d)(12) and 2304(i)),
20 as added by the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press
21 Act of 2009; and

22 (4) the extent to which the Department of State
23 measures the impact of its reports on freedom of the
24 press on foreign governments’ behaviors or practices.

1 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
2 of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of
3 the United States shall submit a report to Congress and
4 to the Secretary of State that—

5 (1) summarizes the results of the evaluation re-
6 quired under subsection (a); and

7 (2) provides recommendations for any legisla-
8 tive or regulatory action that would improve the ef-
9 forts of the Department of State to report on issues
10 of press freedom abroad.