RUSSIA’S LEADERS SHOULD EM-BRACE AND ENCOURAGE FREE-DOM OF THE PRESS

HON. PETER DEUTSCH
OF FLORIDA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 30, 1999

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, as Russia prepares for Parliamentary and Presidential elections, there are alarming signals that the Kremlin is cracking down on privately owned news outlets who have been critical of government policies. In particular, I understand that the independent and highly regarded television station, NTV, has been pressured by officials who are displeased with its news coverage of the Kremlin. There are reports that the owners and reporters of NTV and other news organizations have been harassed, and that government agencies have threatened to deny operating licenses to these organizations, have attacked private media companies through state-owned media, and have issued veiled threats to nationalize NTV and other private media outlets.

Such activities undermine Russia’s free and democratic nature. I find particularly disturbing reports that Yeltsin Administration head Alexander Voloshin has asked his staff to find any grounds possible by which to initiate criminal action against owners of private media enterprises. The most notable example is Mr. Voloshin’s order to the Director of the Tax Police to carry out inspections of the editorial offices of media outlets owned by Media Most, the largest privately owned media company in Russia, headed by Vladimir Goussinsky. The fact that Mr. Goussinsky has consistently submitted tax returns and paid all taxes required by current law since 1992 was apparently insufficient in stopping these egregious searches.

Free press may also be threatened on another front. In the past, the government established a new Ministry for Publishing, TV and Radio with the task, according to Prime Minister Stepashin, of “consolidating” the government’s “ideological work.” This new ministry will have vast powers to oversee and control news content and other aspects of Russian media, including publishing, licensing regulations, advertising, satellite broadcasting, and press distribution. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely concerned about the possible effects that this new Ministry’s policies might have on private and independent media outlets.

Whoever controls media in Russia may well influence the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections. It is generally accepted that favorable television coverage of President Boris Yeltsin’s re-election campaign made possible his ultimate success at the polls. In a democratic society, the diversity of opinion and variety of information that is fostered by a free and independent press is an important part of the political process. The subversion of independent media, especially at this critical juncture in the Russian political process, is disturbing.

If Russia’s nascent democratic system is to succeed, freedom of the press must be preserved. I call on President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Stepashin to ensure that attacks on privately owned media are curtailed, and to publically reinforce the government’s favorable opinion toward freedom of the press in Russia.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF
HON. HENRY BONILLA
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, July 27, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2957) making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the fiscal year 2000 District of Columbia Appropriations Bill. This legislation is a well crafted bill that supports initiatives which reduce crime as well as promote educational opportunities for District residents. The bill makes these significant improvements at a cost to federal taxpayers $230.6 million less than last year’s bill. In addition, the bill continues current prohibitions on the use of these federal funds for abortions and needle exchanges.

I opposed several amendments which restrict the use of local funds or write local law. While these amendments are well intentioned and would be appropriately considered by this Congress in regard to federal law or the use of federal funds, Congress should not write local laws. We Texans don’t want Congress making our local laws, and I respect the right of the City of Washington to decide their local laws, whether we agree with them or not. One of the foundations of our liberty is our federal system which divides responsibility between federal, state and local authorities. I believe we must respect constitutional divisions and focus on federal responsibilities. The fact that I object to these local decisions is not the issue.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

July 30, 1999

RUSSIA’S LEADERS SHOULD EM-BRACE AND ENCOURAGE FREE-DOM OF THE PRESS

HON. PETER DEUTSCH
OF FLORIDA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 30, 1999

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, as Russia prepares for Parliamentary and Presidential elections, there are alarming signals that the Kremlin is cracking down on privately owned news outlets who have been critical of government policies. In particular, I understand that the independent and highly regarded television station, NTV, has been pressured by officials who are displeased with its news coverage of the Kremlin. There are reports that the owners and reporters of NTV and other news organizations have been harassed, and that government agencies have threatened to deny operating licenses to these organizations, have attacked private media companies through state-owned media, and have issued veiled threats to nationalize NTV and other private media outlets.

Such activities undermine Russia’s free and democratic nature. I find particularly disturbing reports that Yeltsin Administration head Alexander Voloshin has asked his staff to find any grounds possible by which to initiate criminal action against owners of private media enterprises. The most notable example is Mr. Voloshin’s order to the Director of the Tax Police to carry out inspections of the editorial offices of media outlets owned by Media Most, the largest privately owned media company in Russia, headed by Vladimir Goussinsky. The fact that Mr. Goussinsky has consistently submitted tax returns and paid all taxes required by current law since 1992 was apparently insufficient in stopping these egregious searches.

Free press may also be threatened on another front. In the past, the government established a new Ministry for Publishing, TV and Radio with the task, according to Prime Minister Stepashin, of “consolidating” the government’s “ideological work.” This new ministry will have vast powers to oversee and control news content and other aspects of Russian media, including publishing, licensing regulations, advertising, satellite broadcasting, and press distribution. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely concerned about the possible effects that this new Ministry’s policies might have on private and independent media outlets.

Whoever controls media in Russia may well influence the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections. It is generally accepted that favorable television coverage of President Boris Yeltsin’s re-election campaign made possible his ultimate success at the polls. In a democratic society, the diversity of opinion and variety of information that is fostered by a free and independent press is an important part of the political process. The subversion of independent media, especially at this critical juncture in the Russian political process, is disturbing.

If Russia’s nascent democratic system is to succeed, freedom of the press must be preserved. I call on President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Stepashin to ensure that attacks on privately owned media are curtailed, and to publically reinforce the government’s favorable opinion toward freedom of the press in Russia.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

SPEECH OF
HON. HENRY BONILLA
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, July 27, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2957) making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the fiscal year 2000 District of Columbia Appropriations Bill. This legislation is a well crafted bill that supports initiatives which reduce crime as well as promote educational opportunities for District residents. The bill makes these significant improvements at a cost to federal taxpayers $230.6 million less than last year’s bill. In addition, the bill continues current prohibitions on the use of these federal funds for abortions and needle exchanges.

I opposed several amendments which restrict the use of local funds or write local law. While these amendments are well intentioned and would be appropriately considered by this Congress in regard to federal law or the use of federal funds, Congress should not write local laws. We Texans don’t want Congress making our local laws, and I respect the right of the City of Washington to decide their local laws, whether we agree with them or not. One of the foundations of our liberty is our federal system which divides responsibility between federal, state and local authorities. I believe we must respect constitutional divisions and focus on federal responsibilities. The fact that I object to these local decisions is not the issue.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL RAILROAD SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.
OF WASHINGTON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 30, 1999

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce The Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Grand Coulee Dam Equitable Compensation Act. This legislation will provide a settlement of the claims of the Spokane Tribe of Indians resulting from its contribution to the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam. Similar settlement legislation was enacted in 1994 to compensate the neighboring Confederated Colville Tribes. That Act, P.L. 103–436, provided for a $53 million lump sum payment for past damages and roughly $15 million annually from the ongoing proceeds from the sale of hydropower by the Bonneville Power Administration to the Colville Tribes. The Spokane Settlement Act, which I am introducing today, provides for a settlement of the Spokane Tribe of Indians claims directly proportional to the settlement afforded the Colville Tribes based upon the percentage of lands

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL RAILROAD SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.
OF WASHINGTON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 30, 1999

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce The Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Grand Coulee Dam Equitable Compensation Act. This legislation will provide a settlement of the claims of the Spokane Tribe of Indians resulting from its contribution to the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam. Similar settlement legislation was enacted in 1994 to compensate the neighboring Confederated Colville Tribes. That Act, P.L. 103–436, provided for a $53 million lump sum payment for past damages and roughly $15 million annually from the ongoing proceeds from the sale of hydropower by the Bonneville Power Administration to the Colville Tribes. The Spokane Settlement Act, which I am introducing today, provides for a settlement of the Spokane Tribe of Indians claims directly proportional to the settlement afforded the Colville Tribes based upon the percentage of lands

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL RAILROAD SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.
OF WASHINGTON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, July 30, 1999

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce The Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Grand Coulee Dam Equitable Compensation Act. This legislation will provide a settlement of the claims of the Spokane Tribe of Indians resulting from its contribution to the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam. Similar settlement legislation was enacted in 1994 to compensate the neighboring Confederated Colville Tribes. That Act, P.L. 103–436, provided for a $53 million lump sum payment for past damages and roughly $15 million annually from the ongoing proceeds from the sale of hydropower by the Bonneville Power Administration to the Colville Tribes. The Spokane Settlement Act, which I am introducing today, provides for a settlement of the Spokane Tribe of Indians claims directly proportional to the settlement afforded the Colville Tribes based upon the percentage of lands