Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act to be Sent to the President
Measure requires expanded examination of freedom of the press worldwide

Washington, DC — Yesterday, the Senate unanimously passed the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, championed by Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), and Congressmen Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Mike Pence (R-IN), co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press. Senator Dodd introduced S. 1739 in the Senate as a companion to H.R. 3714, the House bill authored by Reps. Schiff and Pence that will now go to the President to be signed into law. This legislation expands the examination of press freedom worldwide in the State Department’s annual human rights report.

“In many parts of the world, the freedom of the press is the last—or even the only—safeguard against the complete erosion of all other human rights,” Senator Dodd said. “The horrific murder of Daniel Pearl that shocked the world also opened our eyes to the abuse and harassment that many journalists face, too often at the hands of government authorities. With this bill, we pay tribute to Daniel’s life and his work by shedding a bright light on this repression, and hope to prevent this sort of tragedy from ever happening again.”

“Daniel Pearl’s life was an inspiration to all of us,” Congressman Schiff said. “We hope this legislation will help the United States work with other nations to better protect his colleagues serving on the frontlines in the fight for greater accountability and transparency. Freedom of expression cannot exist where journalists are not safe from persecution and attack. Our government must promote freedom of the press by putting on center stage those countries in which journalists are killed, imprisoned, kidnapped, threatened, or censored.”

The Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act is named in honor of former Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl who was kidnapped and murdered by terrorists in Pakistan, just four months after the September 11th attacks. Provisions in the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act will spotlight governments that seek to silence media opposition. Specifically, the measure calls upon the Secretary of State to greatly expand its examination of the status of freedom of the press worldwide in the State Department’s Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The legislation requires the State Department to identify countries in which there were violations of press freedom; determine whether the government authorities of those countries participate in, facilitate, or condone the violations; and report the actions such governments have taken to preserve the safety and independence of the media and ensure the prosecution of individuals who attack or murder journalists.