



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2005

Help Protect Online Freedom of Speech

Dear Colleague:

When Congress passed campaign finance reform in 2002, the legislation did not identify the Internet as a target of regulation, and rightly so. The explosion of new technology has done much to democratize our politics, encourage grassroots political involvement, and act as a tremendous catalyst for civic engagement across our country. With the emergence of blogs, the Internet truly puts the power in the hands of the people.

Unfortunately, a federal judge has ruled that the FEC's previous broad exemption of the Internet was impermissible, absent clear direction from Congress. Within the next sixty days, the FEC is expected to finalize rules and regulations that could squash not only free speech and political activism, but could well impede innovation and technology – unless Congress acts now.

Today, I introduced the **Online Freedom of Speech Act** in order prevent federal regulation of political speech over the Internet. This bill would amend federal election law to specifically exclude communications over the Internet from the definition of "public communication." It will allow the growth and expansion of new voices and new ideas in our political process free from interference by the federal government. An identical bill (S.678) has been introduced in the Senate by the distinguished Minority Leader, signifying that this effort is by no means a partisan issue.

We ought to embrace these newcomers to our political process instead of applying complex and stifling regulatory burdens. Please cosponsor this important legislation and help me protect bloggers and online activists from the heavy hand of federal regulation. For more information, please call Gerry O'Shea at 5-3484.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Hensarling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

JEB HENSARLING
Member of Congress