Mr. President, Senator

KYL and I will join in introducing

a resolution concerning freedom of the

press, freedom of speech, and freedom

of expression in Iran.

In the past week, the flow of information

in and out of Iran has been suppressed.

Voices in Iran have been silenced,

and the international right to

freedom of expression has been restricted,

especially in the press.

I support Iran’s sovereignty and

deeply respect the will of the Iranian

people. While Iran has enthusiastically

embraced elections, the long road to

democracy does not end there. It also

includes fundamental freedoms, such as

freedom of expression, which is protected

under the International Covenant

on Civil and Political Rights.

In 1976, Iran was one of the first

countries to ratify this U.N. treaty

which also protects the right to hold

opinions without interference and the

right to receive and impart information

in writing, print, or through any

other media.

Our resolution supports the Iranian

people as they take steps to peacefully

express their opinions and aspirations

and seek access to means of communication

and the news. It expresses respect

for the sovereignty, proud history,

and rich culture of the Iranian

people, and recognizes the universal

values of freedom of speech and freedom

of the press.

As President Obama said earlier this

week:

The democratic process—free speech [and]

the ability of people to peacefully dissent

. . . are universal values and need to be respected.

This is the case not just in Iran but

anywhere in the world.

Since the Iranian presidential election

on June 12, there have been increased

restrictions on freedom of the

press in Iran and limitations on the

free flow of information. Newspapers

and news services have been censored,

access for journalists has been restricted,

and specific media outlets

have been blocked. Foreign journalists

have had their press credentials canceled

and videos confiscated. They

have been confined to their hotels and

told their visas would not be renewed.

Bureaus of foreign press agencies in

Tehran have been closed, and others

have been instructed to suspend all

their Farsi-language news.

For Iranian journalists, the stakes

have been even higher. Numerous Iranian

journalists have been detained,

imprisoned, assaulted, and intimidated

since the elections on June 12. Journalists

have been instructed to file stories

solely from their offices, which has

limited their ability to provide timely

and accurate news. There has also been

interference with international broadcasting

in Iran, whether through the

jamming of radio transmissions or

blockage of satellite signals.

Shortwave and medium-wave transmissions

from the Farsi-language

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s

Radio Farda have been partially

jammed, and satellite broadcasts, including

those of the Voice of America’s

Persian News Network and the British

Broadcasting Corporation, have also

been intermittently blocked as well.

These services are widely popular in

Iran, serving as a vital source of communication

and entertainment, and attempts

to thwart such broadcasts are

shameful.

Efforts to suppress the free flow of

information have not focused on the

media alone. Blogs and social networking

sites have been targeted as

well, including popular Web sites such

as Facebook and Twitter. Short message

service in Iran has been blocked—

preventing text message communications

and jamming Internet sites that

utilize such services—and cell phone

service has been partially shut down.

These restrictions have prevented the

free flow of information and precluded

Iranian citizens from communicating

with each other. Some Iranians have

circumvented these restrictions

through proxy Web sites and thirdparty

carriers, and the Internet has

served, at times, as the only outlet for

communication within Iran and with

the rest of the world.

This resolution reinforces the universal

values of freedom of speech and

freedom of the press. It supports the

Iranian people as they take steps to

peacefully express their voices, opinions,

and aspirations. It condemns the

detainment, the imprisonment, and the

intimidation of all journalists in Iran

and throughout the world.

As President Obama said Tuesday:

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I

suggest the absence of a quorum.