

# Free Speech Must Be Free

*How Washington big-wigs are trying to shut you out of the political process*

In the Gettysburg address, President Abraham Lincoln famously defined democracy as being “of the people, by the people and for the people.” But for many politicians, it would be easier if citizens were left out of the process.

## Shouting down the gag orders

In January, Concerned Women for America (CWA) members raised a groundswell of opposition to the Lobbying Transparency and Accountability Act of 2007. This bill contained a provision that would place a gag order on public policy organizations like CWA to hamper our ability to tell you, our members, what Congress is up to. It would have restricted our First Amendment rights to free speech and freedom to petition our government. CWA’s grassroots efforts paid off, and the public pressure caused the Senate to remove restrictions on grassroots organizations.

A liberal attempt to stifle public opinion was again thwarted when the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act arose in the House Judiciary Committee in May. Rep. Martin Meehan (D-Massachusetts) intended to offer an amendment to the bill to include oversight of grassroots lobbying operations, similar to the

provision struck from the Senate bill. CWA members voiced their outrage, and Rep. Meehan abstained from offering his amendment.

Our victory in securing the rights of public expression earlier this year led to two more important victories for the grassroots of America.

## Citizens call for real reform

America’s illegal immigration crisis has become a hot topic, and this year a bipartisan group of Senators introduced a “compromise” bill that they claimed would solve the crisis. Twice the bill was brought to the Senate floor, and twice it was soundly defeated. The key? Grassroots activism.

The American people recognized that the bill did not effectively address border security. Senate offices were flooded with calls and e-mails, and in early June, the motion to proceed to a vote failed.

Just three weeks later, the bill was back on the Senate floor with a bit of spit and polish, a new name — “Immigration Overhaul” — and a frighteningly different process.

The Senate conducted no hearings and no debate in committee as it weighed the measure. Covert proceedings among the bill’s architects and Senate leadership put the bill on a fast track and excluded

many from the process.

Not easily fooled, CWA's grassroots activists once again inundated the Senate with phone calls and e-mails. The dangerous new version also went down in flames.

CWA President Wendy Wright applauded the efforts, saying, "For all intents and purposes, this bill was going straight through Congress, and it was due only to grassroots activism that it was defeated."

### Supreme Court weighs in

Even the Supreme Court has affirmed the public's right to expression and recently lifted a ban on grassroots advertising under the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. A lawsuit filed by Wisconsin Right to Life (WRTL) asserted its right to air issue-related advertisements during an election. The WRTL ads were prohibited because they criticized Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wisconsin) for blocking the confirmation of several of President Bush's judicial nominees during a time when he was running for re-election.

The Supreme Court upheld WRTL's claim. Chief Justice John Roberts maintained in the majority opinion that, "The First Amendment requires us to err on the side of protecting political speech rather than suppressing it."

If democracy is truly "of the people, by the people and for the people," then to silence "the people" is to silence liberty. Your response to CWA's calls to action have helped keep this country free. ■

*By Eva Arlia, Legislative Liason*

#### PRAY

That the Lord will allow CWA to continue to stand in the gap between government and the grassroots.

#### PRAISE

For the victories we've enjoyed this year.

#### ACTION

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Stay alert, and watch for CWA calls to action. To subscribe to our e-alerts, visit [www.cwfa.org](http://www.cwfa.org).

## Generate Income and Give to CWA!

A Charitable Gift Annuity, available through the Christian Community Foundation, can provide you with a lifetime income stream and allow you to make a special gift to the fight for family values. Moreover, you may also be eligible for a substantial charitable income tax deduction the year you make your gift.

For more information, contact Elisa Sumanski at [plannedgiving@cwfa.org](mailto:plannedgiving@cwfa.org) or call, toll-free, 1 (800) 458-8797. \*Note: Not available in all states.