

OPINION

OUR VIEW

A fragile freedom

Freedom of the press, as important as it is, appears to be fragile in some places.

Once of those places is Russia, where President Vladimir Putin dissolved one of the nation’s most respected and credible news outlets and replaced it with what may be a propaganda agency, charged with promoting the Kremlin’s image.

The new agency is owned by the state, but not much more about its scope and structure are known.

The previous news outlet, RIA Novosti, was viewed as fairly balanced and neutral even with its ties to the Kremlin. Instead, RIA Novosti has now been merged with Voice of Russia radio to create Russia Segodnya, or Russia Today. Russia Today seems to provide information slanted toward the positive image of Putin and his party.

Is this move a step toward greater state control of the media in Russia? We certainly hope not. That’s a slippery slope and already Russians are not comfortable with the change.

RIA Novosti said in a story on its own dissolution the move is the latest in a series of shifts

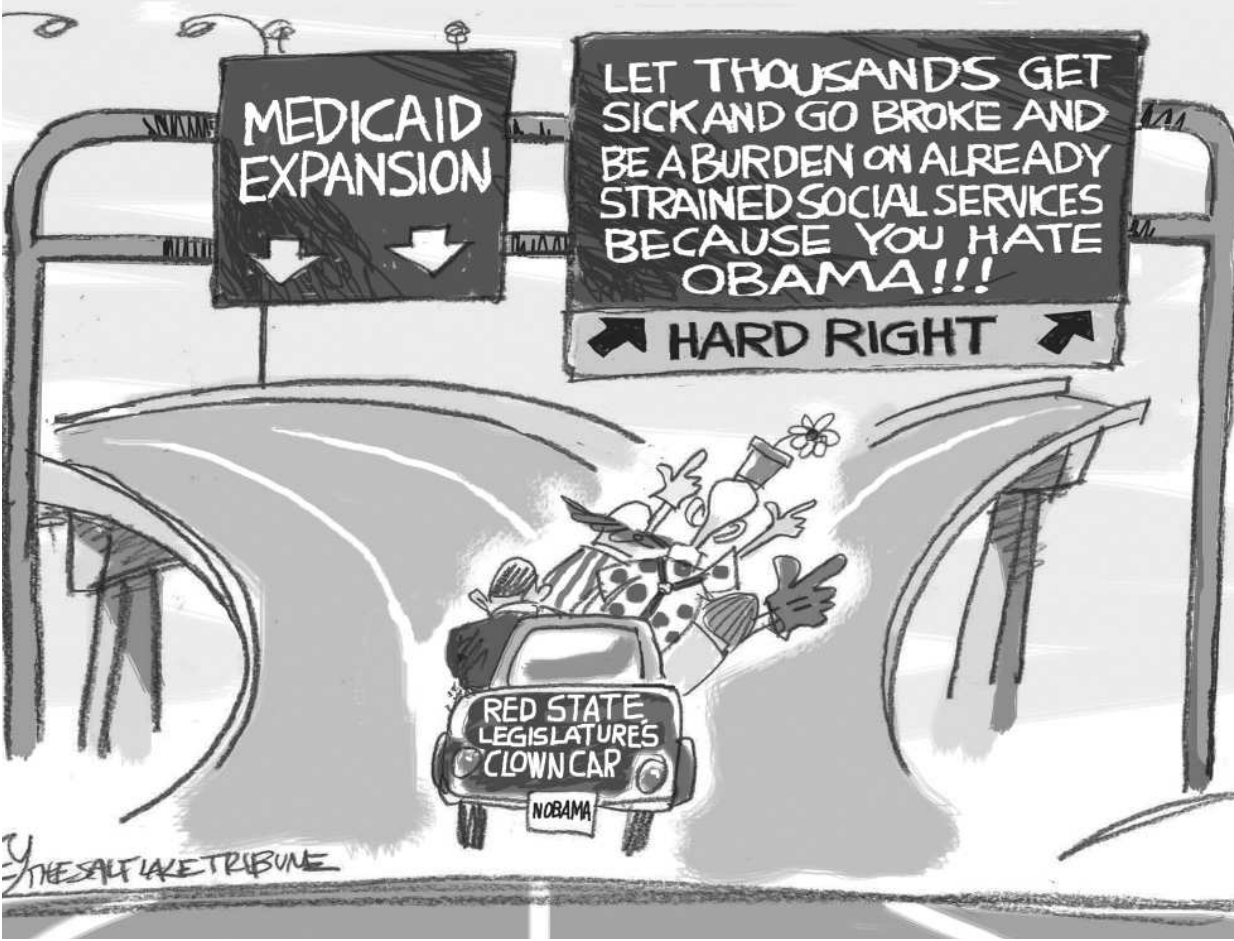
in Russia that appear to lead toward a tightening of the state control in an already heavily regulated media.

The change comes just after protests in neighboring Ukraine sparked when the nation rejected a deal that would have strengthened economic and political ties with the European Union.

Many believe Putin is responsible for pressuring Ukraine into the decision and many believe the media change is an attempt to control how the protests are covered and presented to Russians through the news media.

Clearly, Putin is savvy about how the media plays a role in forming public opinion. With this move, it seems he’s attempting to limit the access his own people have to information about their country, its leaders and it’s plans for the future.

Our Constitution protects freedom of the press by the First Amendment, which prohibits the government interfering with the gathering and distribution of news. But it’s not a right we should take lightly or for granted.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Grateful for training, reaction

**To the editor,**

We in the International Falls area have a great many things to be thankful for. One of these is help from the law enforcement officers and ambulance crews.

I know first hand how capable and efficient they are.

I had an accident on Nov. 30 at Chocolate Moose — caught my leg on the car door and had puncture of an artery. Bleeding very badly, I was helpless. If it hadn’t been for officers Terry Christie and Perryn Hedlund, who answered the ambulance call

and their immediate reaction I wouldn’t be here today.

I am very grateful for their training, their supervision and their ability to immediately react to a tough situation.

**Ormond “Coop” Cooper**  
International Falls, MN

GUEST COLUMN

The liberals who killed Jimmy Stewart

BY RICK JENSEN

Like all certainties in life, rules in the Senate change. One of America’s most glorified political theatrics, the filibuster, now only exists should the majority party choose.

It’s not likely any future majority should acquiesce.

When Republicans during the Bush 41 administration considered changing the rules to eliminate the tradition established by duelist Aaron Burr in 1807 and first actually performed by Senator Henry Clay in 1842, Democrats wailed and cried on how “evil Dick Cheney” might consider overriding Democratic party filibusters by changing Senate rules to allow a simple majority to pass Bush judicial and cabinet appointees.

Frustrated by that annoying little minority party’s ability to prolong the process of confirming President Obama’s appointments, the Democrats chose to light the fuse on the nuclear option they so opposed when Republicans held the majority.

There’s nothing unconstitutional about the move. There’s nothing un-American about it.

There’s also nothing intelligent about it.

The consequences are serious. The Democrats want very much to place liberals on the D.C. Circuit Court. Appointees to the D.C. Circuit Court are not merely anonymous judiciary who toil at thoughtfully considering the U.S. Constitution in ministering their decisions.

This is the minor league team from which many Supreme Court justices have been drafted.

Supreme Court justices from the D.C. Circuit Court include Elena Kagan, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Chief Justices John Roberts, Fred Vinson and Warren Burger.

Now, liberals such as Juan Williams are celebrating destruction of the filibuster as “heroic.” Why? Changing the

Senate rule from requiring 2/3 of the Senate to approve of these nominees to a simple majority of 51 votes allows Obama to load up the court with Big Government liberals who believe the constitution is a flexible living document that can be ignored as they see fit.

Shame on those horrible minority party Republicans for obstructing the right of Senate Democrats to load up the courts as they see fit!

Actually, it is the Democrats’ right as the majority to try and it has been the right of the minority party to use the filibuster to block appointments and legislation, as Strom Thurmond, William Fulbright and other Democrats filibustered against civil rights laws such as the Republicans’ irritating “anti-lynching” laws. How annoying.

And who is Juan Williams’ hero in all of this? The now legendary Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon, who is now considered a “left wing hero” for tenaciously lobbying Senator Harry Reid to end the filibuster forever with the help of fellow Democratic Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico.

Juan Williams celebrates this by explaining Democrats couldn’t pass enough legislation. “Only 56 pieces of legislation have been passed by the 113th Congress and signed into law by the president.”

jurists onto the D.C. Circuit Court in their quest to load up the court with horrible constructionist jurists whose troglodyte beliefs include considering the outdated U.S. Constitution in crafting decisions.

Also remember “Merkley’s Folly,” foolishly setting the precedent to the applause of liberals like Juan Williams, President Obama, Harry Reid, etc., etc., etc.

In the Frank Capra classic, “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” the legendary Jimmy Stewart plays the everyman-good-guy unexpectedly appointed to fill a senate seat, pushing against corruption, compelled to filibuster to save his reputation and land for a boys’ camp. The corrupt politicians all around him defeat him and his constituents over and over again, only to be overcome by the confession of a corrupt politician responsible for attempting the destruction of Stewart’s reputation.

In today’s version, Democrat “hero” Merkley hamstrings Jimmy Stewart from behind, eliminates the filibuster altogether and hands over the governmental puppeteer strings to the Senate Majority Leader who can now do as he pleases while a hogtied and gagged Jimmy Stewart watches helplessly from the sidelines.

No one need confess any wrongdoing because there’s no one to draw attention to any malfeasance.

This is now the legacy of Jeff “Hero” Merkley of Oregon, Harry Reid and cheerleaders such as Juan Williams.

All eyes will look to them when future liberals bemoan Republicans confirming justices like Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia and William Rehnquist to the D.C. Circuit Court, which is really a possibility that could lead us all to a wonderful life.

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