

WASHINGTON – Committee on House Administration Chairman Vernon J. Ehlers, R-Mich., issued the following statement following Wednesday’s announcement by House Majority Leader John Boehner that floor consideration of the Online Freedom of Speech Act (H.R. 1606) would be postponed:

“I support Leader Boehner’s decision to postpone further consideration of H.R. 1606, the Online Freedom of Speech Act. Yesterday’s ruling by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) seems to achieve most of what I and other supporters of H.R. 1606 wanted. The purpose of H.R. 1606 was to preserve the Internet as a free and open forum for the exchange of ideas. The application of a complicated and burdensome regulatory scheme to the Internet would stifle debate and discourage participation – this cannot be allowed.

“The approach the FEC has taken seems designed to ensure that those engaging in politics online will be able to continue doing so, without having to worry about whether or not they are violating our complicated campaign finance laws.

“I am pleased that the organizations that had been advocating a more regulatory approach have expressed their support for the FEC’s new rule. Many bloggers, who had the most at stake here, have done the same.

“While the FEC rule should protect the freedom of Internet expression, I will be watching closely to see how it works in practice. If it proves to not work as intended, if its regulatory scope is expanded in application, or if it otherwise becomes clear that passage of H.R. 1606 is the only way to keep the Internet free of regulation, I will support rescheduling H.R. 1606 for further consideration.”