



FREE TO SPEAK

A Documentary Series
with Nadine Strossen

In Appreciation

The idea that evolved into the massive "Free To Speak" television series and related educational programs began in the mind of my good friend and colleague Bob Chitester. As in the case of Milton Friedman's monumental "Free To Choose," Bob always thought big. Because it had never been done, it was just a reason to do it. "Free speech," said Bob, "was not about just speaking out. Free speech is the very basis for human knowledge and progress. It is far more than an inalienable individual right; it is fundamental to human progress. The freedom to speak, to express one's ideas, conclusions, and skills, to express in every manner possible the essence of our beings results in what we label as human. It is the very basis of the societies we create."

And so, he nursed the idea for a year and more before developing the final "types of speech" that would serve as the unifying building blocks of the series. It was the very thing that made "Free To Speak" unique. Had it not been for Bob's extraordinary vision, "Free To Speak" might never have happened. Certainly, it would not have existed as the overarching concept imagined by Bob Chitester.

When he was invited by Bob to host the series, the award-winning best-selling author P.J. O'Rourke did not hesitate. He was enthralled with Bob's ideas and so signed on immediately, helping to write the initial materials. "Free Speech," P.J. wrote, "was the unparalleled ability of human beings to pass along, impart, transmit, and exchange information, messages, ideas, techniques, understandings, signs, and symbols." In shorthand, P.J. said, "Speech is our opposable Thumb!" P.J. O'Rourke brought along his unique sense of humor and made major contributions to the concept of our project.

On May 8, 2021, after a 7-year battle with cancer, Bob Chitester died just as the team at FTCN were moving the project into production. P.J. was an essential part of that team. We were all shocked and saddened to learn that, despite his love and enthusiasm for the project, his health would suddenly not allow him to continue. P.J. O'Rourke died on February 15, 2022.

Starting in 2001, Phil Harvey and his DKT Liberty Fund became long-term enthusiastic funders of Free To Choose® Network. Phil immediately grasped the importance of "Free To Speak" and helped fund the project.

Regarding commercial speech, Phil said, "Trading prosperity for free speech is an alluring prospect, as seen in China and Vietnam and who knows where, but could be the most dangerous topic of all if people treat that as a model for success." His generous contributions, both for programs and operations over many years, have sustained our organization and enabled it to grow to what it is today, and we are deeply appreciative. Phil Harvey died on December 2, 2021.

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Within ten months of each other, and in the midst of perhaps its most ambitious project since "Free To Choose," FTCN and "Free To Speak" lost its Founder and Chairman, a brilliant writer and friend, and a long-term funder who enthusiastically shared the vision and goals of our organization. "If we succeed," Milton Friedman once said, "it is because we stand on the shoulders of the giants who came before us."

Tom Skinner

Executive Producer: "Free To Speak"

Senior Executive Producer: Free To Choose Network

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