On April 7, I introduced a bill to amend Section 315 of the Communications Act.

Section 315 has a commendable purpose--that of requiring equal time to be granted to opposing political candidates by radio and television stations. Without requiring any radio or television station to give time to any political candidate, it has insured that no particular candidate could be favored by a station. The results have been salutary, and the public has greatly benefited.

Earlier this year, however, literal constructions of the section have resulted in what may become a substantial detriment to the public interest. The Federal Communications Commission, in what appears to be an objective interpretation of the language of the section, has applied the operation of the statute to news broadcasts and telecasts. Rather than submit to the "equal time" requirements, there is every reason to believe that radio and television stations and networks will eliminate certain items of legitimate newsworthiness which serve to keep the public informed about their public affairs.

This should not be allowed to happen. Realizing the urgency of drafting legislation to protect the freedom of the news gathering and distributing services, while at the same time retaining the salutary features of the "equal time" section, I introduced a clear, concise amendment to Section 315 of the Communications Act. It reads as follows:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that section
315(a) of the Communication Act of 1934 is amended by inserting at the end thereof the following: 'Appearance by a legally qualified candidate on any news, news interview, news documentary, panel discussion, debate, or similar type program where the format and production of the program and the participants therein are determined by the broadcasting station, or by the network in the case of a network program, shall not be deemed to be use of a broadcasting station within the meaning of this subsection.'

This amendment, together with two others drawn up by other Members of Congress, is presently the subject of Committee hearings. Some action is almost certain to be taken by the Congress on this important "equal time" question between now and the recess period, probably in late August. As a member of the Communications Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, which is currently holding the hearings on this legislation, I shall certainly exert every effort to obtain favorable action prior to the adjournment of Congress.

- END -