

Celebrity advocates: Worthwhile or worthless?



[David Boaz](#) Executive VP, Cato Institute :

Celebrities clearly can bring attention to public issues. Not only did Congress and President Clinton take note of their thoughts -- now Arena is doing so!

I think we might make a distinction between celebrities appearing at fundraisers or in public service ads, to draw attention to the issues, and celebrities being invited to testify or to give speeches at serious forums. These congressional hearings, of course, are just designed to get the committee members on television to bask in the reflected glory of bold-face names.

Congress doesn't have time to vote on presidential nominations. It doesn't bother engaging in serious oversight of presidential power and civil liberties abuses. It looks at the ceiling and whistles as the national debt approaches Greek levels. But members of Congress have time to listen to a comedian -- doing a character! -- on immigration -- or, a few months ago, to Sigourney Weaver on the topic of ocean acidification.

This seems like a topic for "Really!?! with Seth and Amy" on Saturday Night Live. Really, House Judiciary Committee? You think Stephen Colbert has important information that you need to know? Really? And you're not just doing this to get yourselves on television? Really!?! And you think the most important thing members of Congress could be doing today is getting their pictures taken with Stephen Colbert? Really!?!

Then again, maybe planning the economy and running other people's lives is farce at best, and Congress should just hold hearings with Will Ferrell and John Cleese.