

**THE WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
MUST SEND A FORTHRIGHT MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP  
CONDEMNING HIS ATTACKS ON THE FIRST AMENDMENT**

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To the Officers, Board of Directors, and Members of the White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA):

We, the undersigned, call upon the White House Correspondents' Association to use the occasion of the White House Correspondents' Dinner, to forcefully demonstrate opposition to President Trump's efforts to trample freedom of the press.

The dinner has long served as a symbol of the vital and irreplaceable role of a free press in American democracy and a celebration of the First Amendment and the journalists who uphold it. President Trump's systematic, sustained, and unprecedented attacks on the free press (detailed below) render his presence at such an event a profound contradiction of its purpose.

The collective weight of the administration's actions — retaliatory access bans, coercive regulatory investigations, frivolous lawsuits against the press, defunding of public broadcasting, dismantling of international broadcasting, physical restrictions on journalists, personal verbal attacks on reporters, assaults on the media in official White House press releases and social media posts, the arrest of journalists, and the pardoning of those who committed violence against the press — represent the most systematic and comprehensive assault on freedom of the press by a sitting American president.

There is a long tradition of presidents attending the White House Correspondents Association Dinner. But these are not normal times, and this cannot be business as usual with the press standing up to applaud the man who attacks them on a daily basis.

We understand that some journalists plan to wear pocket handkerchiefs or lapel pins with the words of the First Amendment. And continuing in that spirit, we believe the White House Correspondents Association should take stronger action by issuing — from the podium — a forceful defense of freedom of the press and condemnation of those who threaten that freedom, followed by a standing toast to the First Amendment and a pledge to continue upholding such a critical cornerstone of our democracy. Speak forcefully, in front of the man who seeks to undermine our country's long tradition of an independent, strong, and free press.

We also urge the WHCA to reaffirm, without equivocation, that freedom of the press is not a partisan issue and that the Association will not normalize this behavior but instead fight back against any officeholder who has waged systematic war against the journalists whose work the dinner celebrates.

### **Trump Administration's Attacks on Freedom of the Press**

- In February 2025, the Trump administration banned Associated Press reporters from pooled press events at the White House and aboard Air Force One, after the AP declined to alter its longstanding editorial style guide to replace the internationally recognized name 'Gulf of Mexico' with the President's preferred term 'Gulf of America.'
- In early 2025, the Trump administration stripped office space at the Pentagon from CNN, The Washington Post, The Hill, NBC News, The New York Times, NPR, Politico, and other outlets whose coverage the administration deemed unfavorable.
- The Trump administration implemented Pentagon press rules in September 2025 prohibiting reporters from reporting any information not cleared by the Defense Department, a move a court ultimately ruled violated the First Amendment.
- President Trump has engaged in a sustained pattern of personal verbal attacks on individual reporters, including calling ABC reporter Mary Bruce 'a terrible person and a terrible reporter,' calling Bloomberg News reporter Catherine Lucey 'piggy,' calling CBS reporter Nancy Cordes a 'stupid person', calling New York Times reporter Katie Rogers 'a third-rate reporter' and 'ugly both inside and out,' calling CNN anchor Kaitlan Collins 'the worst reporter,' calling ABC reporter Rachel Scott 'obnoxious' and 'a terrible reporter,' a pattern disproportionately targeting women journalists. Trump also threatening to revoke ABC's broadcast license when the network's reporters asked questions he disliked.
- In a speech at the Department of Justice on March 14, 2025, President Trump, publicly called CNN and MSNBC 'corrupt' and 'illegal' and broadly attacked the independent reporting of major American news organizations as 'illegal', using the bully pulpit of the presidency to delegitimize and intimidate the free press.
- In November 2025, the White House launched an official government webpage titled 'Hall of Shame,' naming and targeting individual journalists and news organizations for reporting that the administration disagreed with. .
- In December 2025, Trump publicly accused The New York Times of treason, labeling it 'the enemy of the people' — rhetoric that press freedom organizations worldwide have identified as characteristic of authoritarian governments.
- President Trump, through FCC Chairman Brendan Carr, launched politically motivated investigations into major broadcast media organizations, including ABC, NBC, CBS, and San Francisco radio station KCBS, for matters ranging from their coverage of immigration enforcement to editorial decisions, using the coercive power of broadcast licensing as a weapon to threaten and suppress unfavorable journalism.
- In January 2025, FCC Chairman Carr launched an investigation into NPR and PBS over their underwriting practices, threatening the federal funding of public broadcasting which serves more than 99 percent of the American population, including rural communities that rely on public media for emergency and disaster information.
- The Trump administration filed a lawsuit against The Des Moines Register, its parent company Gannett, and pollster J. Ann Selzer over a pre-election poll, and the Pulitzer Center, using personal and governmental litigation as instruments of pressure and intimidation against news organizations. The President has also sued the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal for billions of dollars for alleged defamation.

- President Trump filed a lawsuit against ABC News and anchor George Stephanopoulos, which Disney — ABC's parent company — settled for \$15 million directed to the future Trump Presidential Library, plus \$1 million in legal fees, a settlement that legal scholars warned would produce a chilling effect on network journalism.
- President Trump filed a lawsuit against Paramount, the corporate parent of CBS News, over the editing of a '60 Minutes' interview. Paramount settled, paying \$16 million to the future Trump Presidential Library — despite legal experts characterizing the suit as frivolous and predicting CBS would prevail at trial. The settlement came as Paramount sought FCC approval for a multibillion-dollar merger.
- Trump's FCC Chairman threatened Disney and ABC with their broadcast license if they didn't suspend Jimmy Kimmel after comments that conservatives took issue with. ABC took Kimmel off the air for a week.
- In early 2026, FBI agents raided the home of a Washington Post reporter, seizing her phone and computers — a move the Reporters' Committee for Freedom of the Press described as endangering confidential sources and undermining investigative journalism, and which PEN America called evidence of 'a growing assault on independent reporting'.
- In 2026, federal agents arrested journalists Don Lemon and Georgia Fort while they were covering a news event, with two separate federal judges refusing to sign arrest warrants for lack of evidence of any crime, before the Justice Department obtained a grand jury indictment — a prosecution that press freedom advocates characterized as an assault on the First Amendment right to cover matters of public interest.
- The Trump Administration acted against two-foreign born journalists. Mario Guevara, an Emmy Award-winning Spanish-language journalist originally from El Salvador, had lived in the United States for nearly two decades. He was deported by ICE after he was arrested while covering a No Kings rally. Estefany Rodriguez Florez, a Colombian-born journalist who was seeking asylum, was arrested by ICE a day after reporting on ICE raids in Nashville. She was held for two weeks before being released on bail.
- On May 1, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14290, titled 'Ending Taxpayer Subsidization of Biased Media,' directing an end to all federal funding for NPR and PBS through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting — with the White House accusing the media outlets of receiving “tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds to spread radical, woke propaganda disguised as ‘news’.” In July 2025 he signed legislation revoking \$1.1 billion in already-appropriated federal funding for public broadcasting, causing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to shut down and placing over 180 public radio and television stations at risk of closure.
- The Trump administration moved to dismantle the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), silencing Voice of America — a journalistic institution with 83 years of history — and terminating several US news services that broadcast to those living under authoritarian regimes.
- Within the first hours of his second term, President Trump suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid specifically designated to support press freedom overseas.

- On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued a blanket pardon to more than 1,500 individuals charged or convicted in connection with the January 6, 2021 attack on the United States Capitol, including at least eight individuals convicted or charged with violent crimes against journalists present at the scene, and three convicted for destroying media equipment — crimes that were documented on video and prosecuted by the Department of Justice — sending an message that attacks on the press will be forgiven.
- President Trump has publicly expressed personal support for media owners who have demonstrated favoritism toward his administration — including praising Skydance CEO David Ellison (whose company acquired CBS/Paramount under Trump's watch), hosting Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison at the White House for business announcements, and praising Fox News and its leadership — creating a system of rewards for compliant media and punishment for independent journalism that fundamentally corrupts the relationship between government and a free press.
- The United States has fallen to a ranking of 57th out of 180 countries in the 2025 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index — its lowest ranking since the index was first compiled in 2002 — a dramatic and historic decline that reflects the documented and measurable deterioration of press freedom under President Trump's administration

### ***SIGNATORIES- ORGANIZATIONS***

*SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS*  
*NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK JOURNALISTS*  
*NATIONAL PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS ASSOCIATION*  
*FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FOUNDATION*  
*COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM*  
*RADIO TELEVISION DIGITAL NEWS ASSOCIATION*

*INDIVIDUAL SIGNATORIES BELOW*

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Karen Allyn	David Bordewyk	Paul Colten
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Jane Applegate	Sam Brooks	Loretta Cooper
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Perry Ascher	Donna Brusoski	Todd Copilevitz
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Gale Baldwin	Susan Caraher	Patrick J Cullen
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