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Affiliations appear only for purposes of identification.

By email

February 17, 2025

Susie Wiles
White House Chief of Staff
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Associated Press pool access denials

Dear Ms. Wiles:

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the undersigned news organizations write regarding the ongoing exclusion of Associated Press reporters from White House pool events. We are particularly concerned with the significant escalation on Thursday, with the exclusion of the AP from President Trump's news conference with Prime Minister Modi, and on Friday, with all AP reporters being barred from the Oval Office and Air Force One.

Conditioning pool access to White House events on the editorial decisions of any news organization violates First Amendment principles. All news organizations covering the White House are negatively affected when one peer outlet is singled out in a manner that crosses a constitutional line. As a group, we ask you to restore AP's pool participation and ensure that going forward access to White House events is not predicated on improper considerations or disagreement with editorial choices.

The federal courts have been clear for decades that, once the White House opens its facilities to press access, denying access to certain reporters or outlets using "arbitrary or content-based criteria" or "for less than compelling reasons" violates the First Amendment. *Sherrill v. Knight*, 569 F.2d 124, 129 (D.C. Cir. 1977); *see also Kareem v. Trump*, 960 F.3d 656, 660 (D.C. Cir. 2020). That the White House is conducting its campaign against an accredited member of the press corps short of pulling its credential does not justify its actions.

This course of conduct creates a chilling effect long cognizable in our courts as impermissible. The pool system can only work, for the pool members and for the White House, if the routine daily decisions about who is in the room, in the gaggle, or on the plane, are divorced from editorial considerations. The many news organizations reporting on the White House have varied editorial approaches but all have the same collective interest in ensuring that no one is excluded based on their constitutionally protected choices. *See White House Attempted to Shut Out Fox News Reporter*, Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press (Oct. 23, 2009), <https://www.rcfp.org/white-house-attempted-shut-out-fox-news-reporter/>.

The undersigned groups urge you to restore the AP's pool participation and to ensure that editorial viewpoint is not considered in limiting access to the White House or White House facilities. From administration to administration, these are the enduring values that have guided the White House press corps.

Sincerely,

Reporters Committee
for Freedom of the Press

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The Washington Post

cc: Karoline Leavitt
White House Press Secretary