

Chief Jon Belmar  
St. Louis County Police Department  
7900 Forsyth Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63105  
jbelmar@stlouisco.com

Dear Chief Belmar,

It has come to the attention of the Society of Professional Journalists that the St. Louis County Police Department has been interfering with freedom of the press and journalists' ability to uphold their responsibilities as granted by the First Amendment.

When news broke in Ferguson of the mistreatment of the press in August, SPJ and the National Press Photographers Association spoke out and offered training to local law enforcement. We have received no response, and since that time, more news of your department's disregard of the First Amendment has come to light. In an Associated Press article published Sunday, we learned that a request by your department to the Federal Aviation Administration for a no-fly zone over Ferguson was made specifically to prevent press coverage, not as a safety precaution as originally stated.

This incident and similar examples highlight the need for journalists and law enforcement to come to a better understanding of our respective roles, so that we may better serve the public and promote democracy. SPJ is encouraging journalists across the country to open constructive dialogue with law enforcement officers in their communities. It is imperative that those sworn to serve and protect do their jobs without jeopardizing the responsibility of journalists to the public.

SPJ would like to again extend our offer to meet with you and your department, to find ways to work together more effectively and create a more open, transparent community for the citizens you serve and protect daily.

If you are interested in meeting, please call me at 360-920-1737 or email me at [dneuts@spj.org](mailto:dneuts@spj.org). I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Dana Neuts  
SPJ National President  
Society of Professional Journalists  
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