

Good afternoon, my name is Pueng Vongs and i'm here representing the Society of Professional Journalists, the largest association of journalists in the country with more than 10,000 members. I am vice president of the local Northern California chapter.

The Society of Professional Journalists is dedicated to protecting First Amendment rights and defending the journalists who uphold these rights.

We recognize Josh Wolf as a journalist involved in gathering news footage during the G8 meeting protests in San Francisco and releasing that footage to television news outlets.

Whether you are a professional journalist or a citizen journalist, your First Amendment rights remain the same.

In recognition of Josh's work and his conviction, this past November, the Northern California chapter named Josh Wolf one of our journalists of the year for upholding the principals of a free and independent press. The other journalists of the year were Lance Williams and Mark Fainaru-Wada of the San Francisco Chronicle who are also facing prison if they do not reveal sources for an investigative series they wrote.

We are asking speaker Pelosi to intervene to free Josh Wolf immediately on behalf of all journalists and the general public. Here's a short excerpt from a letter drafted to the speaker by our freedom of information committee:

Josh Wolf's historic incarceration symbolizes the threat that all journalists now face, should a federal prosecutor and a federal grand jury take interest in information that they think may be found in a journalist's unpublished notes or footage, whether that information actually exists or not. Mr. Wolf's personal sacrifice — and the sacrifice that other journalists will also face — ensures that the public can continue to receive information unfiltered by their government.

Speaker Pelosi, we implore you to use the influence of your office to bring an end to Mr. Wolf's incarceration that advances no interest in justice and by its precedent, chills the public's ability to enjoy a vigorous, unfettered and informed democracy. (END)

Today i'm also here to announce another award we will be giving to Josh Wolf. Our Freedom of Information committee has honored him with the Online Free Speech Award given at the annual James Madison Freedom of Information dinner in March. Josh is receiving this award for his continuing efforts to publish from prison work defending the rights of journalists and freedom of speech. He has his own blog and is now creating another blog that will allow prisoners to have a voice as well.

Until Josh Wolf is freed and all charges against him dropped, the Society of Professional Journalists will continue to keep the pressure on government officials. Last fall the national organization gave a \$30,000 grant to Josh Wolf's family to help pay for legal expenses. It was the largest grant the organization has ever approved. And we will also continue to push for a national shield law to protect all journalists and their sources.

Thank you...