



Resolution: In Support of World Press Freedom Day

Delegate action: Approved

WHEREAS representatives from the free press groups signing this resolution gathered in New York, NY from April 26 to 27 for a summit celebrating World Press Freedom Day;

WHEREAS we engaged in discussions about, and heard from notable guest speakers on the subject of, the threat of disinformation to democratic institutions, to include a free press and a fair electoral process;

WHEREAS the annual celebration of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to rally support for a free press and to promote the thoughtful consideration of its role in healthy democracies globally;

WHEREAS the First Amendment is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States, ensuring that the public has the right to be confident that the information and images it receives through the free press is as truthful as possible in the moment, and unfettered from government interference. This guarantee of press freedom makes journalists the ally of the people, with an unwritten compact that what they disseminate is gathered through honest means and not intended to deceive;

WHEREAS actors in the United States and around the world are undermining truth, and by doing so, threaten democratic ideals and democratic processes, including the healthy functioning of a free press and fair elections. These efforts to surreptitiously influence the body politic continue unabated, in the United States and globally, and are principally spread through digital means;

WHEREAS these efforts to spread disinformation endanger journalists, inhibit the free flow of information and images and infringe upon the public's right to know the truth about their communities and their world;

WHEREAS journalists are expected to provide a service whereby they assist the public in making informed decisions by disseminating trustworthy information and images guaranteed by their own self-regulated standard Codes of Ethics;

WHEREAS as members of their communities, journalists are duty-bound to ensure that the public receives the factual information and truthful images that it needs to make sound decisions on vital questions, to include electoral decisions. A key aspect of the role of journalists is to debunk misinformation, whether intentional or not;

WHEREAS a free press helps hold people in power accountable, and the absence or curtailment of a free press is a huge threat to democracy as it prevents the exposure of malfeasance by people in power;

WHEREAS it is clearly the case with authoritarian regimes that the failure to uphold the principles of press freedom causes the people to lose faith in the purveyors of information, and causes the people to abdicate their right to govern themselves and ultimately their right to be free;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the nonprofit delegates listed below, participating in the World Press Freedom Day summit in New York on April 26 to 27, will advocate to uphold the democratic process in the upcoming 2020 U.S. electoral campaign by committing themselves to the role of watchdog to guard against all forms of misinformation. Furthermore, they encourage the public to help journalists correct mistakes and counter misinformation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that journalists encourage their readership or viewership, as the election cycle commences, to seek out a diverse range of news stories from a variety of sources, and to be aware that some of the information they find on digital platforms may be false, including misinformation that has been deliberately planted;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that journalists be strongly encouraged by their media organizations to abide by a Code of Ethics, whether written by the media company or by a professional association, in the spirit of self-regulation of the profession;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the nonprofit delegates listed below will support future World Press Freedom Day events as they demonstrably have provided an opportunity to rally and educate and promote a thoughtful consideration of the role of a free press.

James W. Foley Legacy Foundation
Journalism and Women Symposium
National Association of Hispanic Journalists
National Press Photographers Association
National Society of Newspaper Columnists
Open the Government
PEN America
Public Radio News Directors Incorporated
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Without Borders
Society of Environmental Journalists
Society for Features Journalism
Society of Professional Journalists
Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse University