

REPORTERS COMMITTEE

FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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January 16, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Restrictions on press access during upcoming Senate impeachment trial

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer:

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the 57 undersigned media organizations write in opposition to restrictions on the press during the upcoming Senate impeachment trial of President Donald J. Trump.

It is our understanding that the Senate plans to impose restrictions on reporters in the Capitol building that will impair their ability to cover the impeachment trial proceedings, which are of abiding interest to Americans from across the political spectrum. The undersigned news media organizations echo concerns raised by the Standing Committee of Correspondents in its letter of January 14, 2020.

Absent an articulable security rationale, Senate leaders, the Senate Sergeant at Arms, and the United States Capitol Police have an obligation to preserve and promote the public's right to know. Reporters must have the ability to respond quickly to rapid developments and need reasonable access to lawmakers who wish to speak to the press. The reported restrictions on the use of electronic devices and on the ability of reporters to question lawmakers as they move about the Capitol, as well as the additional security screening, will hinder reporting without an obvious benefit for Senate security.

With these restrictions in place, journalists' efforts to share timely and accurate updates and commentary on the proceedings with the American public will be impeded. We ask that Senate security officials and the Senate Rules Committee reconsider these overly restrictive regulations.

Please do not hesitate to contact Gabe Rottman, director of the Technology and Press Freedom Project at the Reporters Committee, at grottman@rcfp.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of
the Press
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The Associated Press
Association of Alternative Newsmedia
Atlantic Media, Inc.
The Atlantic Monthly Group LLC
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Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC
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The News Leaders Association
News Media Alliance
Newsday LLC
The NewsGuild - CWA
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POLITICO LLC
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Investigative Reporting
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Society of Professional Journalists
TIME USA, LLC
Tribune Publishing Company
Tully Center for Free Speech
VICE Media
The Washington Post

cc: The Honorable Roy Blunt,
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

Michael C. Stenger,
United States Senate Sergeant at Arms

Steven A. Sund,
Chief of Police, United States Capitol Police