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National Press Club press conference on PIO controls
March 19, 2014

Thank you all for coming, and thank you, Dr. Carlson, for releasing this study for national Sunshine Week, illuminating a problem that seems to be getting worse and worse.

Your findings also mirror a survey you did last year of reporters who cover federal agencies. It doesn't matter what level of government – local, state, or national – officials are becoming more and more savvy at managing the message. We as journalists – and citizens - *cannot* stand still.

It's no wonder the United States has dropped 13 spots this year in a ranking of countries in press freedom – down to 46th – behind Uganda, El Salvador and Botswana. It's *shameful* what is happening in this country. It's a war over information and we *must* take up arms.

We all know the First Amendment says: Congress shall make NO law abridging freedom of the press. Well, that is exactly what is happening – these rules, policies and practices are abridging freedom of the press – the ability for journalists to do their jobs, to get information to the people so they can more effectively self-govern.

We MUST push back. We must act, as a unified front, as a club – *a Press Club*. And as this great journalistic club, we should focus on three rules:

1. The first rule of Press Club is ALWAYS talk about Press Club. Write about this. Create a Wiki to report and rate bad PIOs – a RateMyPIO website. This isn't inside baseball. This is not the government vs. the press. It's the government vs. the people. *Tell* them.
2. The second rule of Press Club is that *Press Club* makes the rules. WE determine who we talk to, not the government. Work around. Don't follow their rules. Create our own PIO best practices and get agencies to adopt them, or shame them when they don't. Talk to who you want, when you want. What are they going to do, stop sending you press releases? So you miss that the police have a new DARE car. Big deal. Less spam.
3. The third rule of Press Club is to change the game. Push back by going to the top. If you cover schools, get the school board to stop the practices. If you cover a federal agency, make this known to members of Congress. Journalism organizations should band together and go to President Obama and demand change. Real change. We need to dig deeper and investigate these agencies – what are they hiding? Once line employees see you aren't playing along with the brass then they will come to you with even better stories.

Some people tell me, “Dave, sounds a little harsh. Can't we just all get along?” No, we *can't*. We are watchdogs. The Founding Fathers *intended* us to have an adversarial relationship with government. Sure, be professional and nice about it, but we must remember our responsibility to society. Right now that means pushing back to get the information the public needs.

We, the press, carry a big club. Let's use it.