

# REPORTERS COMMITTEE

FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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for purposes of identification.*

July 14, 2016

Hon. Frank G. Jackson  
Mayor, City of Cleveland  
Cleveland City Hall  
601 Lakeside Ave  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Calvin D. Williams  
Chief of Police  
Cleveland Division of Police  
1300 Ontario St.  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Dear Mayor Jackson and Chief Williams:

The undersigned coalition of media organizations writes to urge the City to allow credentialed members of the news media to possess and, if necessary, wear gas masks when covering the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. These items are currently forbidden under Section III.B.(17) of the “Official Event Zone Permit Regulations.”

We propose that, rather than changing the Permit Regulations or formally writing a new policy, the City and its police department leaders simply instruct line officers that credentialed journalists should not be stopped for possessing gas masks and the journalists’ masks should not be confiscated. Philadelphia police, for example, have said that they will not restrict the use of gas masks during the Democratic National Convention, and do not intend to use tear gas.

If law enforcement officers decide to use tear gas on a crowd, that becomes a newsworthy event warranting media attention. Allowing journalists to be present and witness the events benefits everyone involved, including the police. The journalists who are not interfering with police operations and are simply trying to cover the event should be permitted to protect themselves, and should not be forced to try to cover such activity while suffering the sting of tear gas.

In addition, because these restrictions are contained in a document about permitted parades and protests, we worry that not all journalists will see the restriction on gas masks. They should not be detained or have to forfeit that property because they didn’t see the policy. It is self-evident that almost all of the other restricted items would not be allowed. But reporters and photographers who are taking routine measures to protect themselves should not be penalized.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press  
American Society of News Editors  
The Associated Press  
Association of Alternative Newsmedia  
Bloomberg L.P.  
Cable News Network, Inc.  
Chicago Tribune Company LLC  
Dow Jones & Company, Inc.  
The E.W. Scripps Company  
Fox News Network LLC  
Gannett Co., Inc.  
Los Angeles Times Communications LLC  
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The National Press Club  
National Press Photographers Association  
National Public Radio, Inc.  
The New York Times Company  
Newspaper Association of America  
Online News Association  
Radio Television Digital News Association  
Reuters America LLC  
TEGNA Inc.  
The Washington Post

cc: Dan Williams  
Media Relations Director  
Office of the Mayor

Daniel Ball  
Assistant Media Relations Director  
Office of the Mayor

Sgt. Jennifer Ciaccia  
Public Information Officer  
Cleveland Division of Police