

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6143

MAJORITY (202) 225–5074
MINORITY (202) 225–5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

September 21, 2026

Mr. Steven Cheung
Communications Director
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Cheung,

Oversight Democrats are investigating President Trump’s latest, and most blatant, assault on press freedom. As he confronts skyrocketing gas prices, his disastrous war with Iran, and plummeting approval ratings, President Trump is responding by escalating his assault on the Constitution.¹ Following a briefing from White House aide Natalie Harp, President Trump appears to have banned three media outlets from the White House simply because he does not like the content of their reporting, in an attempt to silence criticism.² Shortly after President Trump criticized CNN, MS NOW, and Politico for writing “purposely negative stories” about him and his Administration, reporters from these outlets were denied access to the White House and their badges were revoked.³ The First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press, not freedom from criticism. The American people need to understand what consideration—if any—the White House gave to this serious and unprecedented decision to protect the President’s ego.

On September 18, 2026, President Trump posted on his Truth Social account that he was banning CNN, MS NOW, and Politico from the White House for reporting “FAKE NEWS!”⁴ The President later clarified to reporters that he did not like those outlets because they “want to try and diminish the Republicans and a Republican administration.” Ultimately, the President

¹ *Wave of Setbacks Leaves Trump Frustrated and Looking for Credit*, Wall Street Journal (Sept. 20, 2026) (online at www.wsj.com/politics/elections/wave-of-setbacks-leaves-trump-frustrated-and-looking-for-credit-949ae311).

² *Id.*

³ *3 News Outlets Sue to Regain White House Access*, New York Times (Sept. 21, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/09/18/business/media/trump-cnn-ms-now-politico-white-house-ban.html); *Networks Suspend Pool Coverage of Trump After White House Bans CNN*, New York Times (Sept. 21, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/09/21/business/media/cnn-trump-press-pool-ban.html); *Trump Says He Has Banned CNN, MS NOW and Politico From White House*, New York Times (Sept. 18, 2026) (online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/21/business/media/trump-white-house-ban-lawsuit-cnn-politico-msnow.html>).

⁴ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (Sept. 18, 2026) (online at <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/117293599348325006>).

told reporters that media outlets can write critical stories about him, but that “I don’t have to let them into my—into the people’s house.”⁵ The decision appears to have been made without the input of White House staff, including White House counsel.⁶ Regardless, the next day, reporters from all three outlets were refused entry to the White House upon their arrival to work.⁷ Notably, “the protection afforded newsgathering under the first amendment guarantee of freedom of the press... [and] requires that this access not be denied arbitrarily or for less than compelling reasons.”⁸

It is shockingly hypocritical that a White House that describes President Trump as “the most transparent and accessible president in American history” would hide the President from reporters and make the President inaccessible to representatives from three major media outlets and all readers of their news coverage.⁹ But perhaps this is to be expected from the same Administration that required reporters at the Pentagon to have chaperones and used the Federal Communications Commission’s regulatory authority to censor jokes that the President did not like.¹⁰ Even in his first term, President Trump displayed an utter lack of regard for the freedom of the press, failing in the courts in his pointless feud with former CNN journalist Jim Acosta, seeking to permanently revoke his White House press pass.¹¹

To facilitate the Committee’s investigation into the White House’s assault on the free press, I request the following information and documents and information by October 5, 2026:

⁵ *3 News Outlets Sue to Regain White House Access*, New York Times (Sept. 21, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/09/18/business/media/trump-cnn-ms-now-politico-white-house-ban.html).

⁶ *Wave of Setbacks Leaves Trump Frustrated and Looking for Credit*, Wall Street Journal (Sept. 20, 2026) (online at www.wsj.com/politics/elections/wave-of-setbacks-leaves-trump-frustrated-and-looking-for-credit-949ae311).

⁷ *CNN, MS NOW and Politico Denied Access to White House After Trump Ban*, CNN (Sept. 19, 2026) (online at www.cnn.com/2026/09/19/media/trump-msnow-cnn-politico-white-house-ban).

⁸ *Robert Sherrill v. H. Stuart Knight, Director, United States Secret Service, Etal., Appellants*, 569 F. 2d 124 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

⁹ See The White House, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt* (Jan. 29, 2026) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/01/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karoline-leavitt/).

¹⁰ See *Trump Has Tried to Bar Reporters from Government Spaces Before*, New York Times (Sept. 18, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/09/18/us/politics/trump-bans-media-white-house.html?eafs_enabled=false); Democrats, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Press Release: Ranking Member Robert Garcia and Ranking Member Maxwell Frost of the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs, Launch Investigation After ABC Pulls Jimmy Kimmel Show and Caves to Political Pressure* (Sept. 19, 2025) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-robert-garcia-and-ranking-member-maxwell-frost-subcommittee>); *Trump Applauds Jimmy Kimmel’s Suspension and Seeks to Punish Critical Broadcasters*, Reuters (Sept. 19, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/hollywood-comes-kimmels-defense-after-abc-pulls-late-night-show-2025-09-18/).

¹¹ See *Trump Has Tried to Bar Reporters from Government Spaces Before*, New York Times (Sept. 18, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/09/18/us/politics/trump-bans-media-white-house.html?eafs_enabled=false).

1. A detailed description of when and how you were informed of the possibility that reporters from CNN, MS NOW, and Politico would be banned from entering the White House, as well as your response;
2. A detailed description of who was consulted before deciding that reporters from CNN, MS NOW, and Politico would be banned from entering the White House, including but not limited to any consultation with the Office of White House Counsel;
3. A detailed description of the legal justification the White House relied on in deciding to ban CNN, MS NOW, and Politico reporters from the White House;
4. A detailed description of the factual bases the White House relied on for denying CNN, MS NOW, and Politico access to the White House, and any opportunity given to CNN, MS NOW, and Politico to respond to the ban; and
5. All documents and communications between White House staff regarding the ban on CNN, MS NOW, and Politico reporters entering the White House.

I also request that you immediately preserve all documents, communications, and other materials relevant to the matters described above. Please immediately confirm in writing your compliance in preserving records and communications, as well as providing a detailed catalog of all preserved records.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Garcia', written over a horizontal line.

Robert Garcia
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman