



The White House News Photographers Association

7119 Ben Franklin Station, Washington, DC 20044-7119

Rahm Emanuel
White House Chief of Staff
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Emanuel,

The White House News Photographers Association (WHNPA) is a respected institution in Washington D.C., and, for the past 88 years, is the organization representing still and video photographers at the White House. Like our sister organization the White House Correspondents Association (WHCA), we concern ourselves with coverage and access issues at the White House. On behalf of the WHNPA and its over 600 still and television members, I am writing to ask for an immediate end to excluding still photographers and television cameras from events with President Obama.

Both the administration and the public are well served when there are independent, non-government issued, images of important news events. That is why it has been a long-standing policy of the WHNPA to oppose the use of handouts for any kind of newsworthy Presidential events. Our members are the "Eyes of History" and networks and publications around the world rely on our "eyes" to show them the daily activities of the White House, its occupants and their families. In the first days of the Obama administration events have taken place that an open and free press were not able to see. Accordingly, we recommend you call in, at the very least, the tight pool to independently record these events instead of relying on handout images.

During his Thursday briefing, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs described how a print press pool was brought in and then a photo was released from the re-swearing in, but defended the use of hand-out photos. The job of the official White House photographer is not to provide news photographs that have gone through layers of an approval process before being deemed fit to release. It's not enough to let only reporters in and think that you are really granting access to the press in a transparent way. You cannot bring in the "ears" of the media without bringing in its "eyes" and live up to your stated transparency guidelines.

We look forward to working with you in the coming years.

Sincerely,

Dennis Brack
President, WHNPA