DENVER — Politicians and news outlets in Colorado expressed outrage on Monday over the expulsion from a Republican gathering of an experienced ***politics*** reporter who was told the state party chairman believed her reporting was “very unfair."

Journalists and elected officials, including the former chair of the Colorado Republican Party, came to the defense of Colorado Sun reporter Sandra Fish. The controversy follows the contours of attacks on the press nationally, partly brought on by former President Donald Trump with the popularization of the term “fake news." The ejection also appears to have influenced an endorsement Monday in the Republican primary race.

The state Republican Party announced on the social media platform X that it was endorsing U.S. Rep. Lauren Boebert over one of her primary opponents, Deborah Flora, in the state's 4th Congressional District race, partly because “Deb Flora lied about participating in the CD4 Assembly process, & now she’s boot licking fake journalists who only help Democrats."

The post was a direct reply to Flora's post on X defending Fish, in which Flora said the expulsion was “wrong and a violation of the First Amendment.”

Party Chairman Dave Williams, who introduces himself on the state GOP website as “Dave ‘Let’s Go Brandon' Williams,” is seeking the nomination to run for the 5th District seat held by Republican U.S. Rep. Doug Lamborn, who is retiring from Congress.

In a text, the MAGA-aligned Williams said he had no apologies for kicking Fish out of the assembly in Pueblo on Saturday and accused her of being a “fake journalist” and The Colorado Sun of being biased. When asked, Williams did not provide examples. The Colorado Sun is an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan news outlet that covers Colorado.

“I invite anyone to share any example of The Colorado Sun or Sandra Fish being unfair or inaccurate. So far I have heard nothing,” said Larry Ryckman, editor of the news outlet. “The Founding Fathers weren’t any big fans of newspapers back in the day. But they understood that a healthy democracy demands free, unfettered press.”

The assembly about two hours south of Denver was partly to select representatives to the Republican National Committee and to work on a party platform for the election.

“There are 900,000 Republicans in the state of Colorado and a lot of unaffiliated voters who are interested in what happens at this assembly. And how they find out is via reporters like me being there to cover it," Fish told The Associated Press by phone Monday.

“I am, as one person on Twitter noted, a little old lady. And I’ve been in this business for a long time, and I just don’t think it’s right to eject a reporter from a meeting like this," said Fish, who has covered ***politics*** since 1982.

Fish said she heard rumors prior to the event that she'd be barred from attending, and she asked event organizer, Eric Grossman, who texted her Thursday that he'd get back to her.

“Thanks. I've been covering these assemblies for at least seven cycles and have never had issues before,” Fish texted back. Ryckman attempted to reach Williams on Thursday night to discuss, but said Williams never responded.

Before dawn on Saturday, Grossman texted Fish saying she wouldn't be included on the press list and that “the state chairman believes current reporting to be very unfair.”

“I went anyway because, come on, this should be an open event,” said Fish, who was checked in and given press credentials that she wore around her neck along with a Colorado Sun nametag.

About an hour later, security asked her to leave. Fish showed her press credentials, then Grossman arrived and soon a sheriff's deputy was called. Fish left with the deputy.

“We make no apologies for kicking out a fake journalist, who actually snuck into our event,” Williams said in a text. “Her publication is just an extension of the Democrat Party's PR efforts, and the only backlash we see is from the fake news media, radical Democrats, and establishment RINOs who hate our conservative base.”

Grossman, in a text, said Fish's actions were "a selfish political stunt."

Republican state Sen. Barbara Kirkmeyer defended the reporter, writing in a post on X: “Sandra Fish is a fair; honest and respected reporter, as a Republican I’m embarrassed by the GOP chair."

Former Colorado Republican Party chair Kristi Burton Brown also chimed in on X, describing Fish as “hard-hitting but fair. ... This is a dangerous take by the current (Colorado GOP). ... Transparency is necessary for our nation.”

Among other stories, Fish has reported on how the Colorado Republican Party under Williams’ leadership [*paid for mailers*](https://coloradosun.com/2024/03/01/colorado-gop-trump-mailer/) that subtly attacked one of Williams’ primary opponents, and that [*fundraising slowed*](https://coloradosun.com/2023/05/24/colorado-republicans-dave-williams/) under his chairmanship.