

To: White House Correspondents' Association  
From: White House Press and Communications Office

**RE: New COVID -19 Testing Procedures for Press**

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As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way Americans work over the past year, and the White House is no exception to this rule. Since January 20th, all of us have been working together to figure out how the press corps can engage with the White House in a way that is consistent with White House's COVID-19 safety guidelines.

This changed environment has affected us all. We would like to have more press on the campus, just as we would like to have more of our own staff on campus. We would like to be able to function as previous White Houses did by holding meetings with more than a few people in person and gathering groups of you in offices for casual discussions. But we can't do that because of COVID-19, and because of our commitment from the beginning of the pandemic—nearly a year ago—to safety and to abiding by the guidelines set forth by our COVID-19 experts.

For the White House staff, this has meant that:

- The White House has significantly decreased the number of staff who report to campus each day, and instituted remote work for the majority of White House personnel.
- On the advice from our COVID-19 team, White House personnel who have daily contact with the President or Vice President are tested on a daily basis and are required to wear N-95 masks.
- Persons on campus are required to wear masks at all times, meeting sizes are limited to ensure proper social distancing, and visitors to the White House are permitted only in certain circumstances.

For the White House press corps, this has meant:

- Only 80 members of the press who can physically be on campus at any time, and a lottery program has been instituted to ensure fair access for news organizations that are not in the daily pool.
- In-person coverage of the President, Vice President, First Lady, and Second Gentlemen is limited to the pool, or expanded pools when possible.

As the above indicates, our goal at the White House is the safety of everyone on campus. And as part of that goal, at the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, the White House provided free testing for all of the press on campus every day (which includes not only the pool but also additional members of the press) while we organized our own testing protocols and systems.

Now that we have been able to establish the current protocol and program, we are working to make it as sustainable and as fiscally responsible as possible.

To that end, we are instituting a new policy effective **Wednesday, March 3rd**.

- The White House will continue to maintain a capacity limit of 80 members of the press on campus at one time, and the White House will continue to maintain a sign-up sheet for access to campus.
- Given the critical role that press pools play in ensuring that the White House press corps can provide coverage for the broader media landscape, members of the press who are

part of any pools (in-town pool, travel pool, VP pool, supplemental pool, etc.) will continue to receive testing paid for by the White House on the day they are in the pool.

- Press who have assigned seats in the press briefing room will also receive testing paid for by the White House.
- Press who choose to enter the daily lottery and report to campus will continue to need a daily COVID-19 test, but they will need to pay for their own testing.
  - To ease the administrative and logistical burdens of obtaining and paying for testing, the White House will offer testing on campus and then bill news organizations through Travel Command.
  - The White House will also engage with press organizations to discuss other acceptable testing arrangements if requested, including allowing members of the press to make their own testing arrangements and provide proof of a negative result before entering campus.
- The White House will continue to offer testing at the White House Conference Center on Jackson Place for all members of the press, including to those who will need to pay for their own testing as described above.
- The cost for tests performed at the White House will be roughly \$170.00 per test (rapid antigen) per person, which includes a 6% service charge from Travel Command.

The White House is committed to making the working environment as safe and accessible for everyone on campus, and we are continuing to explore ways to make the White House staff more accessible through the addition of weekly briefings with senior advisors, opportunities for virtual press briefings, and more.

Please stay tuned, and we appreciate your ongoing cooperation and look forward to a time where we can all gather in person.

If you have any questions or concerns please email [presstesting@who.eop.gov](mailto:presstesting@who.eop.gov).