

Dear colleagues,

First of all, thank you for your cooperation over the last year, and particularly the last several weeks, as we've worked to ensure journalists can continue to do their jobs safely at the White House.

To that end, we have more news to share. The White House has informed us that it has determined that budgetary constraints limit the government's ability to provide the daily COVID-19 testing that the White House has required for journalists on campus.

After all the steps we as a press corps have taken to abide by the new health and safety protocols, we share your frustration that these procedures are changing yet again. We are told the budgetary pressure the White House cites is also impacting the number of staffers who can be tested each day.

The administration is not lifting the testing requirement for journalists, but now will require that many in the press corps pick up the costs, effective Wednesday, March 3rd.

It is, of course, well-established that news organizations pay for reporters' use of certain resources, like seats on government planes or the meals journalists are served while in pool holds. But it is our belief that the establishment of the unique security infrastructure that surrounds the White House, to include this new daily testing requirement, should fall on the government, not journalists working to inform the public.

The WHCA has expressed the fear that the cost could be prohibitive for some journalists covering the White House, which may ultimately harm the public's right to know.

But, as detailed in the attached memorandum from the White House, the WHCA has been able to secure several important commitments from the administration to limit some of the impacts of this change to journalists and the American public:

- **The White House has agreed to maintain free daily testing for journalists serving in a pool** for coverage of the president, vice president, first lady and second gentleman. The pool plays a critical role in serving as the eyes and ears of the American public on a daily basis, and representing their colleagues when they cannot all be accommodated in person.
- **The White House has agreed to provide free testing for those assigned briefing room seats** on a given day.
- **The White House has agreed to accept outside tests/testing regimens that meet their standards**, potentially at significantly reduced costs. (See "Testing options" attachment)

Importantly, the White House is not relaxing its social distancing limitations on capacity. As has been the case for the last five weeks, only 80 journalists are allowed on campus at any given time: 40 indoors and 40 outdoors. The allocation, sign up and lottery systems we began at the

start of the administration will continue at this time. We will look for ways to refine this process going forward to enable as many journalists to work from the White House as possible.

As the pace of vaccinations speeds up, the WHCA continues to urge the White House to provide guidance on how long these protocols will be in place and to establish criteria for when they will eventually be eased.

Our advocacy to ensure that all journalists can do their jobs without undue burdens on their work continues. We are happy to address your questions and urge you to direct individual concerns or questions to the White House.

-The WHCA Board