

Free speech - Brochure

Let's anticipate

The Trump administration announced it will begin hand-picking which news outlets are allowed into the White House press pool, breaking decades of precedent in which the White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) chose the pool independently. The press pool is a small group of reporters who get direct access to the president in places like the Oval Office and Air Force One and then share their reporting with news organizations nationwide.

Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt defended the change as necessary to reflect today's media landscape, arguing that traditional DC-based outlets should not monopolize access.

The WHCA strongly condemned the move, warning it allows the government to choose its own press — a direct threat to press independence.

The controversy is intensified by the Associated Press (AP) being barred from the Oval Office and Air Force One after refusing to call the Gulf of Mexico the "Gulf of America," as Trump ordered. AP is now suing the administration, arguing the ban is unconstitutional retaliation based on editorial content.

Seth Stern of the Freedom of the Press Foundation explained why this matters:

- Wire services like AP and Reuters are essential to local news outlets across the country, especially in areas without Washington correspondents. If they lose access, millions of Americans will receive less reliable White House coverage.
- Allowing the government to choose which journalists get access creates pressure to self-censor and rewards friendly coverage, undermining accountability.
- The move is likely unconstitutional under the First Amendment, which forbids punishing journalists based on what they write or how they phrase things.

Stern also noted that press freedom in the U.S. is already declining, with rising arrests, assaults, and legal actions against journalists nationwide, across both red and blue states. International press-freedom rankings for the U.S. have also been falling.

Overall, the changes to the press pool are seen as part of a broader effort to control media coverage, weaken independent journalism, and limit the public's access to accurate, verified information about the presidency.

Let's train

Essay

In today's United States, Donald Trump's confrontations with major news organizations have turned the relationship between political power and the press into a central democratic issue. As the White House seeks to control access to reporters, what is at stake is the public's right to know how it is governed. Media scrutiny shapes political behavior by promoting accountability, influencing leaders' public image, and sometimes provoking efforts to suppress critical reporting.

Media scrutiny first serves as a tool of accountability. When journalists have direct access to leaders, those leaders must explain and defend their actions. The Trump administration's decision to remove

traditional outlets like the Associated Press from the White House press pool weakens this process by limiting independent reporting from the Oval Office and Air Force One.

Media attention also makes leaders highly sensitive to their public image. Trump's repeated attacks on critical outlets and preference for friendly media illustrate how leaders may adapt their behavior to win positive coverage. Instead of focusing only on policy effectiveness, they often prioritize gestures and narratives that appeal to supporters and dominate headlines.

Finally, scrutiny can deter abuse of power, which is why some leaders attempt to control the press. The banning of the Associated Press over its refusal to use government-imposed language like the term "Gulf of America," shows how access can be used as a tool of pressure.

In conclusion, democracy depends on citizens having access to independent, reliable information about those who govern them. Media scrutiny does more than inform the public; it actively shapes how leaders behave.

Synthesis

Donald Trump and his administration have radically transformed modern political communication by turning social media into both a direct governing tool and a permanent performance space. Rather than using platforms mainly to announce policies or promote achievements, Trump uses Truth Social as a personal megaphone, bypassing traditional media and institutional filters. As shown in Document 1, he posts constantly in an emotional, unstructured and often inflammatory style, mixing major policy announcements with personal grievances, praise of himself and random images. This collapses the boundary between official presidential communication and private expression, making politics feel more impulsive, personalized and chaotic.

At the same time, Trump's administration has extended this style to government agencies themselves. Document 2 shows how departments such as the Pentagon or Homeland Security now use memes, pop-culture references and viral audio to promote political messages. This marks a shift from formal, bureaucratic communication to entertainment-driven content designed to attract attention in crowded digital spaces, especially among younger audiences.

Together, these changes have made political communication faster, more emotional and more polarized. Trump's use of social media prioritizes visibility, outrage and loyalty over accuracy or institutional decorum. While this strategy helps mobilize supporters and dominate the news cycle, it also fragments the public sphere, blurs the line between information and propaganda, and weakens traditional norms of political accountability and seriousness.