

FAQ: House Media Credentialing Policy

Why is the House implementing this policy now?

The primary reason is security.

Many state legislatures have maintained formal media credentialing policies for years. Historically, the Arkansas House has not, largely because of the strong working relationships we value with media outlets across the state. That commitment to open access remains unchanged.

However, security risks facing public officials have increased nationwide. According to the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, federal charges related to threats against public officials rose from an average of 38 per year between 2013 and 2016 to 62 per year between 2017 and 2022. Last year, an arrest was made in connection with a threat against a member of the Arkansas House, and House security regularly monitors potential threats.

This policy is intended to balance continued media access with the responsibility to protect members, staff, and the public—particularly in unsecured or limited-access areas.

Where will I need to show my press credentials?

House-issued media credentials are required for access to:

- Designated areas behind members in the MAC Building, and
- Designated media areas within House committee rooms.

Members of the media without House-issued credentials will continue to have access to public seating areas in committee rooms and other public spaces within the Capitol.

What would result in an application being denied?

An application will be denied if the applicant:

- Has a felony conviction,
- Has an outstanding warrant,
- Has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor, or
- Is currently lobbying or working for a political campaign involving the legislature.

Applications will **not** be denied based on the content of reporting, editorial perspective, or method of publication.

Why is my date of birth required?

Once an application is submitted, the House Chief Information Officer or the House Chief Security Officer will request a limited criminal history review from Capitol Police. The request includes only the applicant's full name and date of birth and is limited to the following questions:

- Does the applicant have any felony convictions?
- Does the applicant have any outstanding warrants?
- Does the applicant have any misdemeanor convictions for stalking, assault, battery, domestic violence, or terroristic threatening?

If the answer to either question is yes, the application will be denied.

What if I do not want to undergo a background check?

- You may continue covering committee meetings from public seating areas. Cameras are permitted in these spaces, but placement and sightlines may be limited, and tripod placement cannot be guaranteed.

Is there an appeal process?

Yes. Applicants who are denied a media credential may request an appeal from the House Chief Information Officer explaining why the application should be reconsidered.

Appeals are reviewed on a case-by-case basis in coordination with the House Chief of Staff, House Chief Security Officer, Chief Legal Counsel, and the Chief Information Officer. Applicants may submit letters of recommendation from their employer and/or professional references as part of the appeal.

How long are media credentials valid?

House media credentials are valid for the current biennium (for example, the 95th General Assembly). Members of the media are encouraged to reapply prior to the start of the 96th General Assembly in January 2027.

How long does the application process take?

The application itself takes only a few minutes to complete, and the background check is typically brief. In most cases, a badge can be issued within an hour or less. However, because a large number of applications are expected initially, media members are encouraged to begin the process as early as possible.

What happens if I lose my badge or forget it?

Please contact Capitol Police for a replacement badge. Be advised that replacement badges may be subject to a fee.

Could my badge be revoked?

Yes, but only in limited circumstances. Credentials may be revoked if a credentialed individual:

- Makes a threat against a House member or staff,
- Commits a violent act against a House member or staff, or
- Uses credentialed access to lobby or campaign on behalf of a legislative cause or candidate.

What if I am credentialed but still cannot get the photo or video access I need?

If you experience access challenges, please contact the House Chief Information Officer or speak with a House security officer (“Red Coat”) in the committee room. While designated media areas were developed in consultation with members of the press, adjustments may be necessary as this policy is implemented.

The House will make every effort to be accommodating, particularly during the initial rollout. We recognize that this process may be inconvenient at times, and we appreciate the media’s patience as we work to balance access and safety.