

MEDIA POLICY DRAFT

GOAL

Establish a media policy to enhance the security of House Members during committee meetings and on the House floor while preserving appropriate access for media.

GENERAL

Like the rest of the public, members of the media must pass through a metal detector manned by Capitol Police (CP) before entering the Capitol or MAC Building and may be required to pass through additional screening before entering certain locations, such as the House galleries. Any equipment carried by a media member is subject to inspection by CP.

Once inside these buildings, media personnel may sit in the same areas as the public and take photographs or video, provided they do not cross a pre-determined boundary separating Members' workspaces from public areas.

Media personnel who have been vetted will be issued House press credentials for the duration of the legislative biennium (i.e., the two years of the 95th General Assembly). These credentials allow access to designated press areas in committee rooms and other designated locations, providing improved visibility of testifying witnesses and committee leadership while enhancing security for House Members in non-public spaces.

ELIGIBILITY AND DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, "media" includes individuals who are regularly engaged in gathering, producing, photographing, filming, or reporting news or information for dissemination to the public through print, broadcast, or digital platforms.

Individuals currently registered as lobbyists or employed by, consulting for, or volunteering with a political campaign involving the Arkansas General Assembly are not eligible for House media credentials.

For purposes of this policy, lobbying is defined as direct communications with legislators to influence legislation. This excludes policies or legislation that directly affect the media (e.g. FOIA).

VETTING PROCEDURES

The following procedures apply to media personnel seeking House-issued press credentials:

- Applicants must submit a Press Credential Application to the House Chief Information Officer.
- Applicants must provide their full legal name and date of birth for security verification purposes.
- The House Chief Information Officer or Chief Security Officer will submit a request to Capitol Police for a limited criminal history review.
- Capitol Police will verify whether the applicant:
 - Has any felony convictions, or
 - Has any misdemeanor convictions for stalking, assault, battery, domestic violence, or terroristic threatening.
 - Has any outstanding warrants

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

Under no circumstances will an applicant be denied a press credential based on the content of prior reporting, editorial perspective, or method of publication.

PRESS PASS

Vetted media members must wear their issued House press pass in a visible manner at all times while accessing designated press areas.

House-issued credentials remain the property of the Arkansas House of Representatives and may be revoked if eligibility requirements are no longer met during the biennium.

APPEAL PROCESS

Applicants denied a House media credential may request an appeal from the House Chief Information Officer.

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

Decisions on appeals are final.

COMMITTEE ROOMS – CAPITOL

Prior to the official start of a meeting, vetted and non-vetted media personnel may interact with a member near the member's seat if the member agrees. Once the meeting begins, all media personnel must move to public seating. Vetted media may then move to designated press areas.

Media members must comply with instructions from Capitol Police and/or the Chief Security Officer or designee to maintain clear exits and ensure safety.

MAC BUILDING – ROOMS A AND B

Prior to the official start of a meeting, vetted and non-vetted media personnel may interact with members. Once the meeting begins, all media personnel must move to public seating. Vetted media may access designated press areas.

Media members must comply with instructions from Capitol Police, the Chief Security Officer, or designee regarding safety and emergency access.

EQUIPMENT AND ACCESS

Only credentialed media members may place microphones, audio equipment, or other recording devices on tables or in designated witness areas.

Camera placement, tripod use, and equipment positioning for non-credentialed media may be limited based on space, safety, and operational needs and cannot be guaranteed.

DURATION OF CREDENTIALS

House media credentials are valid for the duration of the legislative biennium. Media members seeking continued access must reapply prior to the start of the next General Assembly.
