

August 19, 2026

RE: DHS final [rule](#) establishing a fixed time period of admission for representatives of foreign media organizations and journalists (July 17, 2026)

Dear Members of Congress,

We are a coalition of nonprofit journalist associations and press freedom advocacy organizations writing in opposition to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) new restrictive rule ending the decades-long practice of admitting foreign correspondents for as long as their assignments last.

Published in the Federal Register on July 17, 2026, the rule caps most international journalists on I visas at 240 days, or less than eight months, and those holding passports issued by the People's Republic of China, excluding Hong Kong and Macau, at 90 days. Any extension beyond that is a matter of government discretion. The rule will take effect on September 15.

It has long been the tradition of the United States to welcome foreign correspondents to lawfully reside in the U.S. to work and report independently for as long as they are employed by a non-U.S. news agency. This long-term stay has enabled journalists to gain the in-depth knowledge, networks, and immersion needed to accurately and effectively explain America to worldwide audiences.

The new restrictive rule not only tarnishes America's reputation as a global beacon of press freedom and a haven for journalists under threat. It also reduces the quality and quantity of coverage about the United States. As a result, the world will have a less nuanced understanding of who we are and how our government and society work, while recognizing that many sectors vital to the U.S. economy, such as finance, education, culture, and science, benefit from overseas coverage of their work.

In addition to undermining long-term journalistic activities, the 240-day renewal cycle creates instability for journalists and their families seeking to establish themselves in the United States, including signing a housing lease or registering children in school.

We are also deeply concerned that officials could threaten journalists with deportation and non-renewal if their reporting does not contain content and tone acceptable to a sitting administration. Granting government officials broad and capricious authority to deny or delay journalists' visa applications is dangerous, providing an administrative tool for retaliation and censorship of critical and independent journalism.

While the rule allows for extensions, it requires an additional fee of at least \$420 per application as well as extensive paperwork. Such applications are processed by an agency carrying a significant backlog of pending cases, into which this new rule will add additional applications. This places journalists on uncertain footing about the status of their application and ability to

continue journalism uninterrupted. Alarming, DHS has noted that extension requests are not approvals, thus subjecting the journalist to potential deportation. We have already seen ICE detaining and deporting people whose renewal status was under review, leading to reasonable apprehension of politically motivated refusals.

Journalists already condemn Russia, China, Hong Kong and other countries for abusing the visa process to punish journalists in retaliation for their reporting. This rule puts the United States in the league of repressive and anti-free press governments, and enacting it could lead other countries to impose similar limitations on American journalists working overseas.

DHS has claimed that the revision aims to enhance security and counter fraud in the visa system. This argument, however, is not persuasive or based on substantiated evidence with respect to I visa holders. Foreign journalists undergo extensive vetting to obtain an I visa and their continuing eligibility depends on maintaining a contractual relationship with a qualifying foreign news organization. This condition lapses the moment the foreign employment does. In the published rule, DHS has cited no pattern of fraud or abuse among I visa holders, let alone examples of real security threats. DHS instead dismisses, injudiciously, the advice of the public, including journalists and press freedom organizations, to preserve the decades-long policy.

The rule also imposes strict caps on the stay of foreign students and exchange visitors, undermining the exchange of information and skills among a wide range of professions. These restrictions will also fall on foreign students who attend U.S. journalism schools, ironically to learn about America's 250-year tradition of press freedom and ethics in journalism.

We therefore urge Congress to:

- **Block this rule before it takes effect on September 15. Members may introduce a joint resolution of disapproval, and they can press DHS directly through oversight and appropriations.**
- **Unless and until Congress acts, DHS must publish plain-language guidance at least three weeks before the rule takes effect. That guidance must outline the eligibility criteria it will apply, the evidence it expects, and the procedures for both initial applications and extensions.**
- **Insulate issuance decisions from politics and from delay. Insulation from politics means published standards, stated reasons for any denial, and a route to speedy review. Insulation from delay matters equally, because an extension request left unanswered for months achieves what an outright refusal could not survive public scrutiny for doing.**

In 1776, America's revolutionary founders explained themselves to the world out of "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind." They grasped that a democratic republic owes the world

an account of itself. A visa rule that puts journalists who provide that account on a 240-day leash is a poor way to mark America's 250th anniversary.

We ask all Members of Congress to preserve America's reputation and the fundamental right to a free and independent press as enshrined in the First Amendment.

Endorsing Organizations

Alianza de Medios Mx
American Society of Magazine Editors
Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association
Asian American Journalists Association
Associated Collegiate Press
Association of Foreign Press Correspondents - USA
Coalition For Women In Journalism
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Electronic Frontier Foundation
First Amendment Coalition
Free Press Action
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Inter American Press Association (IAPA)
International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors
Journalism Education Association
National Press Club (NPC)
National Press Club Journalism Institute (NPCJI)
National Scholastic Press Association
Online News Association
PEN America
Quill and Scroll
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
RootsAction
Society of Environmental Journalists
Society of Professional Journalists
The Foreign Press Association - USA
The News Media Guild TNG-CWA Local 31222
The NewsGuild of New York
The NewsGuild-CWA
Voices Unbound
Welcome Enterprises Inc