

Practices and Principles of Coverage Access for Independent White House Press

Basic Practices:

The President takes questions from the press on a regular basis, no less than once per week, and is available in response to significant news developments.

The President holds full press conferences at least once a month and takes questions frequently from the pool.

The President allows the pool to witness and record him or her at work on a regular basis.

The press corps or its designated pool sees the President frequently on working days, and sees the President on weekends and holidays whenever there are movements by the protective pool.

When the President leaves his or her domicile, he or she is always accompanied by a protective pool that visually witnesses, at the least, arrivals and departures from any place of entrance or exit that is in view of the public, and covers the President in the act of doing the public's business.

Pool "sprays," in addition to offering visual journalists the chance to record the President at work, are a time for reporters to ask the President questions about the events of the day.

Briefings are on the record, as a general practice. Background briefings, in which speakers are not identified, are reserved for subjects of special sensitivity.

Embargoes are used to give reporters time to digest complicated or dense material in advance of its public release. Their use should be limited, and never used routinely to generate early-morning coverage of a White House event where no outside input is permitted.

The pool moves as a full group (as laid out in section two) with members representing each sector of the media. When in rare circumstances the White House makes the President available to a partial pool (in a stills-only or photojournalists-only event, for example) the rest of the pool gets access to see, hear and question the President in close succession.

The President takes questions from the full traveling press corps frequently during foreign trips. Foreign leaders who meet with the President take questions in a side-by-side news availability or press conference. In settings where a foreign leader refuses to take questions from the press corps, the President takes questions independently.

In dealing with host governments during foreign travel, the White House works to admit the full pool to all significant events. When the U.S. is the host government, American officials work to achieve the same level of openness and press access that are expected when the American delegation is the guest.

Minimum Standards for the Constitution of the Press Pool:

*Open Press, with full and free access by all media requesting it, should be the default.

*The press corps urges the White House and all serious Presidential campaigns to admit expanded pools (greater than the size of the 21-member in-house pool) whenever possible.

*The White House Press Pools are formed to represent the wider press corps in settings where the full press corps cannot be reasonably accommodated. The pool is assembled to reflect the broad array of media through which the American people and those all over the world consume their news.

*The pools are assembled by the press corps. Every hard-pass holder is eligible to apply for membership in one or more pools, and to be admitted must meet the criteria of the individual pool administrators. (The TV pool sets its criteria and admits members, as do the Radio, Print and Foreign Press Group pools. The Wires do not pool.)

*The In-town Travel Pool consists of no fewer than 13 members (three wire writers, four still photographers, one independent still photographer, one print pooler, one radio pooler and three network crew members).

*The Air Force One Traveling Pool consists of no fewer than 13 members (three wire writers, four still photographers, one print pooler, one radio pooler, one WHCA print pooler and three network crew members). Digital, multimedia and foreign press are eligible to participate through the supplemental pool rotation to fill open seats.

*The In-House Pool, for events on the White House complex, consists of no fewer than 21 members (In-town Travel Pool plus

three for AP TV or CSPAN, foreign pooler, Dow Jones and AFP wires and two extra camera crew for the network pool).

*For events outside the Washington, D.C., area, the pool should include at least one member of the local print press. The local pooler should have access to all events open to the print pool, including fundraisers, leisure activities and church events. Members of the WHCA and the White House will extend to the local pooler all courtesies usually given to any member of the White House press corps.

Specific Accommodations:

Air Force One: Whenever the President travels on Air Force One, there is a full Traveling Press Pool traveling with him or her.

Bill Signings are open to the pool.

Briefing Room: All Presidential appearances in the briefing room are open press.

Briefing Room Feed: Presidential remarks at open press events are fed live to the briefing room. Presidential remarks at pooled press events are fed live to the briefing room or replayed as soon as possible, except under exceptional circumstances.

Gaggles on Air Force One are fed live to the briefing room, when technology allows, and are replayed when requested.

Camp David and/or personal Presidential retreats: The White House discloses where the President is at all times and what he or she is doing, including the appointments he or she is keeping,

calls he or she is making and other public business. The leisure rules (see below) apply.

Campaign events: Any campaign event at which the President appears, while seeking reelection or on behalf of another candidate or committee, is open press and the full pool is always there. A transcript of the President's comments are made available to the press in a timely manner.

Celebrations on the South Lawn: Pool covers celebrations with entertainment (such as Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day, the annual congressional picnic, etc.).

Church or House of Worship: When the President attends a religious service, the 13 members of the in-town travel pool have a photo spray on arrival or departure from the service. The four print reporters, the radio reporter and the TV producer sit in on the service, but only if the full pool cannot be accommodated. The service may or may not be recorded for broadcast, at the host's discretion.

East Room and South Lawn events: are open press events, with an exception for space restrictions at events like "In Performance." In case of exception, full pool is admitted.

Embargoes: Information that has been previously made public by the White House or other agencies is not subject to embargoes. Embargoes are not to be used to prohibit news organizations from publishing information they acquire through independent channels in advance of a public release from the White House.

Evacuations of the White House and other emergencies: As in the critical coverage of the events of 9/11, the White House

keeps a pool (only as restricted as is absolutely necessary, and including at least one representative of each media platform) in close proximity to the President at all times. When the White House goes on lockdown and/or the President is moved to a secure portion of the White House or off-campus facility, the White House takes care to keep a tight pool in close proximity and fully informs the press corps as expeditiously as possible. We understand that the top priority of White House staff and Secret Service in emergency situations is to protect the President, but we urge officials to be mindful of the public's right to know the President's condition. We ask that they keep the press corps informed in a timely fashion.

Foreign leader meeting: Every meeting with a foreign leader (including heads of state, government and other prominent leaders) is preceded or followed by a pool spray.

Foreign travel: The White House and Press Advance teams work to secure the same levels of access abroad as those observed domestically.

Fundraisers: The pool covers the President's remarks. The White House does not consent to participate in super PAC fundraisers where the super PAC is unwilling to agree to basic transparency and coverage of formal remarks.

Government media: As a general principle, the White House should not use its own videographers and photographers as a replacement for independent press coverage. When White House photographers and videographers are present, the press pool should be included whenever possible. The press pool should be given the same vantage and access to pooled and open events as the White House photographers and videographers.

Interviews: The press office notifies the press corps of when the President is taping or participating in live television, radio or online interviews, or otherwise releasing new information on social media, and, where possible, releases a transcript. Anytime an announcement or speech or statement is released via Twitter or Facebook or the like, it should be simultaneously sent out, or at least pointed out, via email to the customary White House press lists.

Kennedy Center Honors and Christmas in Washington: Open Press coverage of guest arrivals and presentation. Pool covers entire event, including remarks and performances.

Large Rooms, like the State Dining Room: in-house pools are accommodated, with additions invited as often as possible.

Large-group meetings with the President: The White House default is on the side of meaningful press access to events that involve large numbers of attendees (breakout sessions and summits, for example) and at the least notifies the members of the press corps that they are taking place and provides basic information about the sum and substance.

Leisure: The White House discloses when the President is engaging in a leisure activity outside the residence (golf, for example) and releases the names of those accompanying him or her on these trips, either in advance or as the events happen. The WH allows some reasonable amount of video and still photo access and coverage, which should never be less than the access and perspectives given to any unilateral photographers or public onlookers at the site. The full pool accompanies the President on these outings. In cases where leisure events include a

politician, prominent official or head of state, a pool spray is allowed at minimum.

Livestreams: Any POTUS event that is livestreamed or otherwise disseminated contemporaneously by the White House is open to coverage by the pool. Livestreams and other White House broadcasts are not a substitute for in-person coverage of an event.

Marine One: Marine One arrivals and departures at the White House are always open press. During late night and early morning hours when the briefing room is closed, Marine One arrivals and departures are always open to the full pool. Marine One arrivals and departures at locations away from the White House are covered, at minimum, by the traveling pool.

Medical Information: As with all off-campus visits, the pool accompanies the President on medical visits. The White House releases timely information about the President's health, including any medical procedures or tests, erring on the side of speedy disclosure in the interest of making sure the public knows the state of the President's health and capacity at all times.

Motorcade: The lead Press Van is no more than 10 vehicles behind the President's vehicle in the motorcade.

Newsmaker meetings: There is pool coverage of arrivals with heads of state, congressional leaders and bill signings, or any other event at which the White House plans to release a contemporaneous photo.

Off-campus events: When the President leaves the White House or off-campus site for a private event, the White House discloses what he/she is doing even if the pool is not admitted.

On-the-record briefings: For briefings that are conducted on background, the White House provides an explanation for why briefers should not be identified. Briefers should always be identified at least to the participants in a call so they know who is speaking even if they cannot name them in their reports. Conducting briefings on “deep background” is discouraged in almost all circumstances.

Photo pool sprays: The President takes questions from the press several times a week during pool sprays with the full pool. Pool sprays are open to the full pool and are a time for reporters to observe the President in person and ask him or her questions.

Presidential movements: When the President leaves the White House grounds by car or on foot, there is a full pool walking with him/her or in the main package of the motorcade.

Print Pool Reports: Print pool reports are the responsibility of the pooler, and the White House shall not exercise any editorial role or delay dissemination. Staffers may point out factual inaccuracy, but the decision on any changes rests with the independent print pooler. The print pool and the WHCA board take responsibility for sending corrections and clarifications.

Public Schedule: The White House releases a daily public schedule for the President that notes meetings in which he or she is doing the public’s business.

Rose Garden events: are always open for press coverage.

Secret pools for trips to danger zones: The White House runs the regular rotations to select the members of these pools. Pool participants agree to scrupulously keep the formation of the pool, the trip and its details off the record, and all information very closely held, until the White House releases it on the record.

Stakeouts: Visitors to the White House complex always have the option to make an open press appearance at the stakeout location.

State Dinners: Pool covers - at the very least -- toasts, arrivals and entertainment. The White House opens these events up to an expanded pool upon request.

Transcripts and/or audio of gaggles: The offices of the President, vice President and first spouse release all official transcripts they generate to the press corps as soon as they are available.

Travel Planning: The White House provides off-the-record guidance for planning purposes well in advance of all Presidential trips.

Twitter and social media: White House social media accounts should not be used to circumvent the press corps.

Vacations: are covered by the press corps and pools. On-camera briefings are conducted on a periodic basis, by call of the White House or request of the news media.

Vice President: The vice President abides by the same level of transparency as these principles outline for the White House in general.

Visitor Logs: The White House provides records of White House visitors on an ongoing basis, in keeping with its voluntary disclosure policy.

White House records: The White House has a heightened obligation to release records dealing with the president's health, finances and ethics. The tax returns and medical report of the president should be released as they are completed. Names, titles and salaries of all White House employees should be disclosed at least annually. Ethics waivers and White House visitor's logs should be disclosed on an ongoing basis.

The White House should comply with all relevant executive orders and presidential memoranda concerning open access to data by other executive branch agencies, including Executive Order 13642. White House data is to be released in machine-readable, nonproprietary, bulk format, and the White House should maintain a separate data inventory page on its web site. The White House will not hamper any legitimate attempts by news outlets attempting to gain automated access to its electronic resources, including web crawling, scraping or retransmission of live feeds.

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Special practices for Fundraisers:

Fundraisers should be open press wherever possible, and otherwise open to the full pool. The very smallest pool that should go in is the "print pool," also known as the "pencils" in the travel pool (the print pooler, a TV producer, three wire writers

and a magazine writer).

The print pool covers - at the very least -- the President's formal remarks. The White House facilitates the flow of information including, but not limited to, the name of the host, the number of people in attendance and the ticket price (suggested contribution, range of contributions or minimum amount). Where the group is especially exclusive (i.e. fewer than 20 people) a list of attendees is also provided.

When the President appears at super PAC events, the White House discloses or directs the sponsor to disclose to the pool the same information (or comparable information) as is supplied at other fundraisers.

The information comes in as a timely fashion, at minimum by the morning of the event.

The pool covers, at minimum, the President's opening remarks at the event.

The White House provides a readout of the portions of the event that the pool does not witness.

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Campaign Accommodations:

We believe that transparency does not begin in the White House, and that all presidential aspirants embrace these principles and practices, to the extent applicable. In all sections herein, "the Candidate" shall be substituted for "the President," and "the Campaign" shall be substituted for "The White House" for the purposes of establishing the minimum

standards for press access on campaigns. Specific practices relating to monitoring the minute-by-minute movements of candidates shall only be applicable once a protective pool has been formed, but campaigns are encouraged to include the press in as many of the candidates' activities as possible before that point. Pooled events shall not be used as a substitute for open press access to the candidate.