

THE
**REPORTERS
COMMITTEE**
FOR
FREEDOM
OF THE
PRESS

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Lucy A. Dalglish
Executive Director

September 6, 2008

The Honorable Bob Fletcher
Ramsey County Sheriff
Law Enforcement Center
425 Grove Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

The Honorable John Harrington
Chief of Police
367 Grove Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Last night's tickets issued to reporters covering protests

Dear Sheriff Fletcher and Chief Harrington:

As you know, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press has worked hard over the past three months with its team of volunteer local lawyers to establish procedures that would minimize the risk that reporters and news photographers would be prevented from covering protests during the Republican National Convention. I know that you and your staffs have been in contact with our lawyers, Paul Hannah, Bill Tilton and George Dunn.

I was in St. Paul this week and I am familiar with the issues faced by local law enforcement officers who were trying to keep order. (You may recall I was a reporter at the *Pioneer Press* for 13 years in the 1980s and 1990s. I know the area very well.) It could not have been an easy task for police, particularly on Monday when the anarchist types were breaking windows, slashing tires and taunting police.

Nevertheless, I was shocked to wake up this morning and hear that up to 20 reporters, most of them local, were stopped from doing their jobs last night while covering the march from the capital area into downtown. I understand that none of the reporters heard warnings to stay off the bridges if they didn't want to be arrested. Numerous reporters followed the demonstrators on to the bridges, were caught in the police action and then detained with the demonstrators.

Given the heat of the moment, I guess I'm not surprised by the initial detentions. What I don't understand are your subsequent actions, as reported to me by several sources. I am told that while the detention was ongoing, our lawyers and several local editors and news directors were on the phone negotiating the segregation of the accredited journalists from the crowd so they could be removed from the scene and released. Promptly releasing them without charge would have assured they were back on the street working on the public's behalf as journalists.

We have been told that commanders on the scene were preparing to release the reporters when you ordered that they be given tickets for criminal violations. It is clear that officers on the scene recognized them as working journalists and not security risks. What conceivable purpose is achieved by citing them with criminal

STEERING COMMITTEE

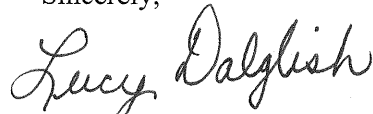
- DAN ABRAMS
MSNBC
- SCOTT APPLEWHITE
The Associated Press
- WOLF BLITZER
CNN
- DAVID BOARDMAN
Seattle Times
- CHIP BOK
Akron Beacon Journal
- EARL CALDWELL
Pacific Radio
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CBS News
- RICHARD S. DUNHAM
Houston Chronicle
- ASHLEA EBELING
Forbes Magazine
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- NEIL LEWIS
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Slate
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Legal Times
- DOYLE MCMANUS
Los Angeles Times
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for purposes of identification.

charges? Once you knew they were journalists, why did you have to engage silly bureaucratic nonsense?

It was obvious to me that Twin Cities area law enforcement agencies spent enormous amounts of time, energy and money preparing for the Republican National Convention. No doubt, your officers would like to be proud of the job they did this week. On behalf of all of the journalists who also worked hard this week to inform the public about our political process, please ask the city attorney to drop these ridiculous citations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Dalglish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lucy A. Dalglish
Executive Director

Cc: John Choi, City Attorney