



The White House News Photographers Association
7119 Ben Franklin Station, Washington, DC 20044-7119

March 14, 2013

Ms. Kendra A. Barkoff
Press Secretary
Office of the Vice President of the United States
Kendra_A_Barkoff@ovp.eop.gov

Re: Deletion of Photographs

Dear Ms. Barkoff,

I am writing on behalf of the organizations listed below regarding an incident that occurred on March 12, 2013 after the Vice President's speech in Rockville, Maryland, where one of your staff members ordered Jeremy Barr, a journalist for the Philip Merrill College's Capital News Service to delete from his camera all the images taken at that event.

While we commend your office for immediately apologizing to the reporter and Dean Lucy Dalglish of the University of Maryland College of Journalism in response to her letter of complaint regarding the incident, we do not believe that such a blatant violation of free press/speech rights protected under the First Amendment should pass without comment.

Absent voluntary consent or exigent circumstances there are no situations whereby the government may search or seize the contents of a camera and as stated in a May 14, 2012 letter from the Department of Justice to the Baltimore Police Department in a similar case, "Under the First Amendment, there are no circumstances under which the contents of a camera or recording device should be deleted or destroyed" (emphasis added).

In order to ensure that situations like this one do not ever happen again (and quite frankly we don't understand how there could have ever been such a "total miscommunication" about these self-evident rights) we would like to meet with members of your staff to discuss "event" coverage from your perspective and ours.

Thank you very much for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Ronald Sachs
President
president@whnpa.org

On behalf of:

Mike Borland, *President* National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)
Bruce Brown, Executive Director, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP)