

June 12, 2017

Jason Dahl
Chief of Police
Willows Police Department
201 N. Lassen Street
Willows, CA 95988

Re: Threats against *The Sacramento Valley Mirror*

Dear Chief Dahl:

The undersigned journalism organizations are deeply concerned with the threats leveled against *The Sacramento Valley Mirror* staff, which have been the subject of several editorials in that newspaper. As we understand the situation, this past April, the owner-editor of the *Mirror* newspaper and one of its reporters received several death threats after reporting on a local death.

Any time attempts are made to silence the free press, including through threats and intimidation, they must be taken seriously. In an atmosphere of rising anti-press rhetoric, reporters must be protected. It is vital that the press be able to do its job and cover controversial issues and events without facing threats and intimidation from those seeking to silence them.

When the First Amendment rights of journalists are under assault, the public ultimately pays the price. As the U.S. Supreme Court has held, “an informed public is the essence of working democracy.” *Minneapolis Star & Tribune Co. v. Minnesota Comm’r of Revenue*, 460 U.S. 575, 585 (1983). In order to achieve that result, we must have an independent press to help provide the free flow of information that is essential to intelligent decision-making and self-government.

We urge local law enforcement to give all threats of violence against reporters the careful attention they deserve to ensure that the press can continue its crucial work and that the public’s interest in truthful reporting on current events can be defended.

Sincerely,

Association of Alternative Newsmedia
California Newspaper Publishers Association
Californians Aware
Committee to Protect Journalists
First Amendment Coalition
Online News Association
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
Reporters Without Borders
Society of Professional Journalists

cc: Gary Hansen, Mayor
Wayne Peabody, City Manager