



July 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer:

The News Media for Open Government is a non-partisan coalition of news media and journalism organizations that supports policies that protect the freedom of the press and the free flow of information. We are writing to request your support and consideration of S.751, the Journalist Protection Act, introduced by Senators Richard Blumenthal and Robert Menendez.

Journalists play an important role in our nation's democracy. By gathering and reporting the news, they ensure that our nation's citizens know what is going on in their communities and how the government is responding to events of the day. Journalists report from the front lines to cover news events, often putting their health and safety at risk, including most recently the public protests in reaction to George Floyd's killing, as well as the government's response to COVID-19 pandemic. Fact-based, credible news has never been more important as citizens in our country crave information about what is going on around them.

It is troubling that, during this time of incredible turmoil and crisis, journalists' First Amendment rights have been disregarded and many have been assaulted and threatened while doing their jobs. The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker (<https://pressfreedomtracker.us/>), which has been tracking assaults and threats against the press in recent years, found that during one three-day period at the end of May 2020, there were roughly 100 attacks or other intimidating actions against the press which has contributed to an overall number of more than 500 for the year.

The Journalist Protection Act would make it a federal crime to intentionally cause bodily injury or threaten a journalist in a manner designed to intimidate him or her from gathering or reporting the news. The News Media for Open Government believes that, with the Journalist Protection Act, Congress will send a strong message by reaffirming the First Amendment protections granted to our nation's journalists and give Federal prosecutors the ability to prosecute individuals who assault or intimidate journalists, if state or local prosecutors fail to do so.

We ask that you stand with journalists gathering and reporting the news and schedule a vote on S. 751, the Journalist Protection Act.

Sincerely,

News Media for Open Government

cc: Members, United States Senate

Members of NMOG include: The Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsmedia, MPA – Association of Magazine Media, National Association of Broadcasters, National Newspaper Association, News Leaders Association, News Media Alliance, Online News Association, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Society of Professional Journalists