

January 14, 2021

Jeffrey A. Rosen
Acting Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Acting Attorney General Rosen:

On January 6, Americans watched in shock and horror as a violent mob opposed to the certification of the 2020 presidential election overran the United States Capitol building, resulting in five deaths and widespread destruction to the seat of our democracy. Since then, federal law enforcement agencies have remained virtually silent regarding these appalling events and the potential for future violence. We, the undersigned organizations, call upon the Administration and federal law enforcement agencies to rectify this unacceptable and alarming failure to provide vital, timely information to members of the press and by extension the American people. The agencies must share information about possible civil unrest in the days leading up to Inauguration Day, January 20, through frequent and regular in-person press briefings so the public and news outlets can be properly informed about viable threats and can take appropriate action to protect themselves.

Following major incidents impacting the safety and security of the nation and the public, government officials normally brief the press quickly and often hold multiple, regular media briefings. For example, the first press conferences by national and local officials following the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City occurred later the same day of the bombing, and, at the request of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), officials in Oklahoma City formally established a daily press conference with both local and federal officials participating.

Here, however, the various law enforcement agencies investigating the Capitol riot – including the U.S. Capitol Police, FBI, Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and others – were slow to hold in-person briefings to explain their findings, answer questions or inform the public about the possibility of future attacks, including at the upcoming inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. Americans waited almost a full week after the attack for the first press conference by law enforcement about the Capitol riot. This delay in holding even a single briefing needlessly kept citizens in the dark and is both inexcusable and inexplicable, particularly given that federal authorities reportedly have

been seeking the public's help in identifying the perpetrators of the attack. We appreciate the recent decision by the acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia to dedicate a team of federal investigators to specifically look into attacks on journalists, but this is not enough.

Going forward, we urge federal law enforcement agencies and officials to commit to holding regularly scheduled in-person press briefings about the investigations into the January 6 riot and continuing threats to our national and state governments. The media outlets and journalists we represent feel privileged to uphold the First Amendment by informing the public with vital information every day. But to perform their jobs most effectively, law enforcement officials must be more transparent. Given the clear challenges facing our democracy today, greater transparency and openness is a necessary prerequisite for restoring public faith in our political institutions and their operations, including security and law enforcement operations.

We look forward to further discussing these matters with you.

Sincerely,

National Association of Broadcasters
Asian American Journalists Association
National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters
National Association of Hispanic Journalists
Native American Journalists Association
News Leaders Association
News Media Alliance
News Media for Open Government
National Newspaper Association
Online News Association
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
Society of Professional Journalists

cc: Christopher A. Wray, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
Pete Gaynor, Acting Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Yogananda Pittman, Acting Chief, U.S. Capitol Police
Timothy P. Blodgett, Acting Sergeant at Arms, U.S. House of Representatives
Jennifer Hemingway, Acting Sergeant at Arms, U.S. Senate