



March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Perez
Chairman
Democratic National Committee
430 South Capitol Street SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Chairman Perez,

I am writing today on behalf of the Radio Television Digital News Association, the world's largest professional association devoted exclusively to advocating on behalf of broadcast and digital journalists, thousands of whom live and work across the United States.

We respectfully request that you encourage 2018 Democratic U.S. Senate and U.S. House candidates, their campaign leaders, and their campaign staffs to treat all journalists with respect and professionalism. Specifically, I am asking that you urge them not to use rhetoric that inflames the passions of those who harbor ill will toward the Fourth Estate.

Just a few years ago I would have considered the necessity for a request such as this unimaginable. But as you know, we presently live in a divisive political and ideological environment in which cries of "fake news" and the label of journalists as "the enemy of the American people" have emboldened those who either don't like, or don't understand the role of, journalism to act out, too often in harsh ways.

According to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker (pressfreedomtracker.us), of which RTDNA is a founding partner, there were at least 44 physical assaults on journalists in America in 2017. There have been at least four physical attacks so far this year. I am certainly not implying that candidates in this year's election cycle are, or have been, responsible for those assaults; rather, I am suggesting that words matter – especially words from our nation's political leaders.

Whenever journalists are harassed, threatened, obstructed, or assaulted, those journalists are not the victims. The real victims are the people of the United States whom those journalists have a constitutionally-guaranteed duty to serve by, among other things, reporting on congressional campaigns.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my request.