

January 18, 2023

Dear Speaker McCarthy and Democratic Leader Jeffries:

We urge you to allow C-SPAN to broadcast House floor proceedings using cameras under their independent control, just as they did during the debate concerning the recent election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. We make this request on behalf of the American people in a letter endorsed by press freedom organizations, government accountability and civil liberties organizations, and media outlets.

Americans of all political stripes enjoyed and benefited from the vastly improved coverage of events on the House floor during the speakership negotiations. Up-close views of impassioned discussions among representatives from across our country have bolstered our civic life by making our government more transparent. They have enabled the public to better engage with and understand the debates that animate the House of Representatives and enabled the press to better report on the conduct of our elected officials.

The footage humanizes those in power. It fosters greater understanding of their motives and of the interplay that is the give-and-take of democracy. It affords journalists and the public a more complete and accurate picture of what goes on in Congress. It makes it easier for the members striving to be understood by the public to make their case. Even [lawmakers agree](#).

There is a long history of public access to the floor of the House of Representatives. Members of the public have long been able to review the proceedings in person without impediment. So too is there [a long history of press access to the House of Representatives](#). Members of the press have long had close access to Members of the House and have always used technology to tell that story.

In our internet era, video coverage of the House of Representatives should be as good as attending in person. Not everyone can travel to Washington to observe their elected officials at work. There is no reason for those Americans, from voters to journalists to school children, to be subject to an inferior perspective where so much more is possible.

The logistics of how this would work have been outlined by C-SPAN in letters over the decades, including [to Speaker Gingrich](#), [to Speaker Pelosi in 2007](#), and [to you last week](#). Political control over the cameras must end. Let the free press be free.

Speaker McCarthy recently declared “this chamber is now fully open for all Americans.” It’s time to make that a reality.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, policy director, Demand Progress Education Fund, at [daniel@demandprogress.org](mailto:daniel@demandprogress.org) and Seth Stern, advocacy director, Freedom of the Press Foundation, at [seth@freedom.press](mailto:seth@freedom.press).

Sincerely yours,

Advocacy for Principled Action in Government

Arizona Press Club

ARTICLE 19

Center for Public Integrity

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Committee to Protect Journalists

Common Cause

Data Foundation

Defending Rights & Dissent

Demand Progress Education Fund

Electronic Frontier Foundation

First Amendment Coalition

Fix the Court

Free Government Information (FGI)

Free Press Action

Freedom of the Press Foundation

Friends of the Earth U.S.

Government Information Watch

GovTrack.us

Issue One

Lincoln Network

Modified Limited Hangout (Blog)

Ms. Magazine

National Press Club

National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)

National Security Counselors

Online News Association

Open The Government

PEN America

People For the American Way

Project On Government Oversight (POGO)

Protect The 1st Foundation

Radio Television News Directors Association

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Surveillance Technology Oversight Project

TechFreedom

The Authors Guild

The Center for Investigative Reporting (d/b/a Reveal)

The Digital Democracy Project

Tucson Sentinel

Tully Center for Free Speech

Votebeat

Woodhull Freedom Foundation