



Mayor Tom Bates
Police Chief Michael Meehan
City of Berkeley

Dec. 8, 2014

To Mayor Bates and Chief Meehan:

As the nation's largest union of journalists, we are writing to express our outrage and disgust over the treatment of reporters and photographers covering this weekend's protests in Berkeley.

We have heard multiple reports of journalists pushed and even struck by law enforcement officers, in one case even as the victim was showing a press badge. This suggests to us a complete lack of education and policy attention to the rights and responsibilities of journalists covering protests and the resulting police response in your city.

Berkeley residents expect their city leaders and law enforcement officers to uphold free speech and the public right to know. Therefore we are asking to meet with you to discuss immediate steps to avoid a repeat of such an incident.

We have worked successfully in the past with other cities, including Oakland, to put in place policies that ensure appropriate response to the presentation of a press badge, including mandatory briefing on press rights for officers called in as mutual aid during times of crisis.

The Guild works closely with other major journalism organizations in the Bay Area and beyond, including NABET-CWA, SPJ and the National Press Photographers Association, and we would be happy to pull these groups together to begin a dialogue with Berkeley city leaders.

Time is of the essence. We urge you to contact Guild Secretary-Treasurer Sara Steffens, 510-332-9483 or sara@newsguild.org, as soon as possible, to discuss next steps.

Sincerely,

Bernie Lunzer
President, The News Guild-CWA

CC: Charles Burress
Calvin Fong
Christine Daniel