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Cedar Rapids Gazette  
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Community Publishing Co., Armstrong  
Des Moines Register  
Iowa Broadcasters Association  
Iowa Cubs  
Iowa Newspaper Association  
Iowa Public Television  
KCCI-TV, Des Moines  
KCRG-TV, Cedar Rapids  
Meredith Corporation  
N'West Iowa REVIEW, Sheldon  
Quad-City Times, Davenport  
Sioux City Journal  
Storm Lake Times  
WHO-TV, Des Moines  
Woodward Communications Inc.,  
Dubuque Telegraph Herald,  
Dyersville Commercial, Cascade  
Pioneer, Manchester Press, Mount  
Vernon-Lisbon Sun, West Branch  
Times, West Liberty Index, Marion  
Times, Solon Economist, North  
Liberty Leader, Linn News-Letter

## FIRST AMENDMENT MEMBERS

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Drake University School of Journalism  
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Communication, Iowa State University  
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Indiana-Illinois-Iowa Foundation for  
Fair Contracting  
Iowa Association for Justice  
Iowa Association of School Boards  
Iowa Broadcast News Association  
Iowa Center for Public Affairs  
Journalism, IowaWatch.org  
Iowa High School Press Association  
Iowa Institute for Public Accountability  
KWWL-TV, Waterloo  
RAYGUN LLC  
School of Journalism and Mass  
Communication, University of Iowa  
Washington Evening Journal  
Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier  
David Yepsen, Des Moines

January 30, 2019

Carmine Boal  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Iowa House of Representatives  
1007 E. Grand Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Madame Clerk:

I write to you to share the concerns of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council regarding the application Laura Belin, the proprietor of the "*Bleeding Heartland*" blog, has filed with your office seeking Iowa House press credentials.

The Iowa FOI Council was established 40 years ago by a coalition of leaders from across Iowa — representatives of broadcast and publishing, attorneys, educators, business executives, librarians and open-government advocates — to provide a shared voice on issues pertaining to the First Amendment freedoms and better government accountability.

We are greatly troubled by your office's decision to deny Iowa House press credentials to Ms. Belin that would provide her with equal access to House proceedings and work space that other Iowa journalists now enjoy when covering the House.

We are troubled, because this decision is in stark contrast with the tradition of openness to in-depth media coverage that the Iowa General Assembly has long supported.

Ms. Belin's blog is a go-to outlet for in-depth news, analysis and commentary — as well as the related source documents — on issues and officials involved in Iowa government and Iowa politics. Her readers are located throughout Iowa and across the United States. They include well-known journalists at news outlets like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and CNN, as well as members of the General Assembly and the U.S. Congress.

This following makes her one of the most-read political reporters and commentators in Iowa and underscores how inappropriate it is for your office to deny her press credentials.



Carmine Boal  
January 30, 2019  
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I have studied the most recent versions of the Iowa House Rules and Joint House/Senate Rules on the website of the General Assembly. I have scrolled through lists of currently credentialed news media representatives and have taken note of some of the past recipients of House press credentials — such as Craig Robinson, proprietor of The Iowa Republican blog, and Mike Devine, host of a public affairs talk show on KVFD radio in Fort Dodge.

Nothing in these rules provides a legal basis for justifying the denial of press credentials for Ms. Belin. That leaves the Iowa FOI Council to wonder if it is the content of some of her news reports and analytical postings that led to your decision to not grant her press credentials.

The Iowa FOI Council believes that would be an impermissible intrusion by an arm of state government on the constitutional protections afforded by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and by Article I, Section 7 of the Iowa Constitution. It is the Council's sincere hope that your office and Ms. Belin can resolve this issue without her having to turn to the courts to obtain a suitable remedy to this dispute.

I encourage you to reconsider your decision and approve Ms. Belin's request without further delay.

Thank you for your consideration of the Iowa FOI Council's views on this important issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Randy Evans  
Executive Director  
(515) 745-0041  
IowaFOICouncil@gmail.com

cc: Laura Belin