



Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

requesting media accreditation

Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>
To: "Boal, Carmine [LEGIS]" <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov>

Sun, Jan 27, 2019 at 10:29 AM

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

In a January 25 written statement, your office asserted, "The House rules limit access to the floor of the House to 'representatives of the press, radio, and television,'" adding that applicants meeting those requirements "have received credentials. Those that do not have been denied. House Rules have been applied uniformly and without consideration of content."

I am requesting a list of applicants who have been denied credentials to cover the Iowa House this year, as well as a list of people whose requests were denied during previous years when you have served as Chief Clerk.

A look at this year's list of credentialed reporters demonstrates that you have not applied the stated standards uniformly. Jack Hunt represents a news source that is not delivered through newsprint, radio, or television. I have also confirmed that in past years, the Iowa House has credentialed others reporting for online publications, including Craig Robinson of The Iowa Republican, Lynn Campbell of IowaPolitics.com, Meghan Malloy of Iowa Independent, and at least one correspondent for the Iowa Watchdog website.

Iowa Judicial Branch rules for covering court proceedings define "news media" as "any person who regularly gathers, prepares, photographs, records, writes, edits, reports, or publishes news or information about matters of public interest in any medium." In *Bierman v Weier*, the Iowa Supreme Court stated, "A person or entity like ASI whose regular practice is to (1) receive written materials prepared by a number of different third parties and (2) make finished products from the materials that are designed to be more suitable and accessible for the public to read should be considered a publisher and a media defendant for purposes of our case law."

Bleeding Heartland meets the definition of news media. This month alone, I have written and published thousands of words about Iowa legislative happenings. Iowa Senate staff approved my request for credentials.

Again, I ask you to reconsider your prior denial.

Yours,

Laura Belin
1705 Plaza Circle
Windsor Heights, IA 50324
(515) 276-6971

<http://www.bleedingheartland.com>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Fri, Jan 18, 2019 at 2:05 PM
Subject: Fwd: requesting media accreditation
To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov>

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

Upon review of counsel, I have learned that the Iowa House rules and Congressional reference cited in your January

4 message have been improperly applied to my request for press credentials.

Iowa House Rules 4 and 20 discuss what members of the press can do in the House chamber but say nothing about who qualifies as a member of the press.

The Congressional rule requires credentialing for applicants whose chief attention is the gathering and reporting of news. Bleeding Heartland meets this standard, having published thousands of articles about Iowa politics (and hundreds about the General Assembly) since 2007. As Bleeding Heartland's publisher and primary author, I am a member of Investigative Reporters & Editors, a non-profit organization that verifies applicants for membership are "substantially engaged in news gathering, presentation or production in either print, broadcast or online."

Additionally, Iowa law defines and governs what constitutes "influencing legislation or any other action." Iowa Code 68B.2(13)(b)(2) specifically states that people "engaged in the reporting and dissemination of news and editorials" are not lobbyists.

Under Article I, Section 7 of the Iowa Constitution, no government agency or official may restrain or abridge the freedom of the press.

For those reasons, I believe your prior denial of Bleeding Heartland's credentials were in error. I respectfully ask you to reconsider in light of the above information.

While I reserve the right to take all necessary further actions to ensure a proper outcome with respect to credentialing, and will do so if needed, I hope we can come to an agreement that the previous denial was mistaken, and that the Iowa House of Representatives should grant my request for credentials.

Yours,

Laura Belin

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Date: Tue, Jan 15, 2019 at 8:07 AM

Subject: Fwd: requesting media accreditation

To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov>

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

On what legal basis are you denying me accreditation to cover the Iowa House during the General Assembly's 2019 session? I regularly publish a substantial amount of original content related to Iowa politics, and my website has thousands of unique visitors a week. The Iowa House has accredited others reporting for non-traditional outlets, such as Jack Hunt of the Iowa Legislative News Service.

Please clarify your position, with references to specific language in rules or statute.

Yours,

Laura

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Date: Fri, Jan 11, 2019 at 9:23 AM
Subject: Fwd: requesting media accreditation
To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov>

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

Yesterday I received news releases from the offices of all four Iowans who represent the state in the U.S. House and participated in a press call with U.S. Senator Joni Ernst.

Since the members of Congress from Iowa view me as a member of the news media, on what basis does the Iowa House deny me accreditation to cover the General Assembly's 2019 session?

Thank you in advance for clarifying your position.

Yours,

Laura

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Tue, Jan 8, 2019 at 2:12 PM
Subject: Fwd: requesting media accreditation
To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov>

Circling back on this question. Can you point to specific language in the rules that would exclude me as a member of the press? Or is the objection grounded in Iowa House leaders disliking the content of my reporting?

Thank you for any further information you can provide.

Yours,

Laura

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Laura Belin** <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>
Date: Sat, Jan 5, 2019 at 3:38 PM
Subject: Re: requesting media accreditation
To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov>

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

I see nothing in House Rules 4 or 20 or in the Congressional rules that would exclude me from accreditation to cover Iowa House proceedings. Bleeding Heartland regularly publishes a substantial volume of news material related to the Iowa legislature. The Iowa House has accredited reporters for non-traditional outlets such as the Iowa Legislative News Service or the Franklin Center's "Iowa Watchdog," which had a strong ideological component to its coverage.

Please tell me what specific language you see as justifying your position.

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/HR/852453.pdf>

<https://periodical.house.gov/accreditation/rules-and-regulations>

Thanks,

Laura Belin
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On Fri, Jan 4, 2019 at 4:06 PM Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov> wrote:

Laura,

Rules for the press are addressed in House Rules 4 and 20. For further guidance, the House has used Congressional rules governing the press galleries. These guidelines are accessible on Congress' website.

Thank you,

Carmine Boal

Chief Clerk

Iowa House of Representatives

515.281.4280

From: Laura Belin [mailto:desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com]

Sent: Friday, January 4, 2019 10:02 AM

To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS]

Subject: Re: requesting media accreditation

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

What are the criteria for issuing press credentials at the Iowa House? A common definition of a journalist is a writer or editor for a news medium. In Wisconsin, the standard for a member of the statehouse press corps is someone who routinely publishes original news and information about the legislature that is of public interest. I have been covering Iowa legislative happenings for Bleeding Heartland for nearly 12 years. My original reporting about the

Iowa legislature has been picked up by the Des Moines Register, among other news organizations.

My original reporting about Iowa politics generally has been cited in many Iowa and national media outlets. I have been credentialed as media to cover numerous political events and was given a seat on the press bench at a Polk County District Court hearing last month.

Thank you in advance for further explanation of your selection process.

Yours,

Laura

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On Thu, Jan 3, 2019 at 1:53 PM Boal, Carmine [LEGIS] <Carmine.Boal@legis.iowa.gov> wrote:

Laura,

Press credentials are not issued to members of the public, however, the public is able to observe all floor action from the House galleries as well as online. Additionally, subcommittee and committee meetings are open to the public.

Thank you,

Carmine Boal

Chief Clerk

Iowa House of Representatives

515.281.4280

From: Laura Belin [mailto:desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 3, 2019 11:47 AM
To: Boal, Carmine [LEGIS]
Subject: requesting media accreditation

Dear Chief Clerk Boal,

I would like to apply for a seat in the Iowa House press gallery during the 2019 legislative session, but I was unable to find an accreditation form on the website. Any guidance you could provide would be appreciated.

Thank you in advance, and happy new year.

Yours,

Laura Belin
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