

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 10188

To restore press access to the Pentagon, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 31, 2026

Ms. JACOBS (for herself and Mr. BACON) introduced the following bill; which
was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To restore press access to the Pentagon, and for other
purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting Pentagon
5 Press Access Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

7 The purposes of this Act are—

8 (1) to promote accurate and independent re-
9 porting about the defense policy and military serv-
10 ices of the United States by restoring to credentialed

1 journalists access to the Pentagon that successive
2 administrations permitted until 2025; and

3 (2) to remove unreasonable restrictions on
4 credentialed journalists imposed by Secretary of De-
5 fense Peter Hegseth, including restrictions imposed
6 by the May 23, 2025, Secretary of Defense Memo-
7 randum titled “Updated Physical Control Measures
8 for Press/Media Access Within the Pentagon” and
9 the October 6, 2025, Secretary of Defense Memo-
10 randum titled “Implementation of New Media In-
11 brief”.

12 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

13 Congress makes the following findings:

14 (1) The Founders of the United States en-
15 shrined freedom of the press in the First Amend-
16 ment to the Constitution of the United States be-
17 cause they recognized that democracy requires a free
18 and vibrant press capable of uncovering and dissemi-
19 nating the knowledge necessary for citizens to hold
20 the government to account.

21 (2) Independent journalists were invited to
22 work from inside the Pentagon before the building
23 opened during World War II because Secretary of
24 War Henry Stimson understood the need for accu-
25 rate reporting on the national security efforts of the

1 United States and recognized the value to both the
2 public and leaders of the Armed Forces in providing
3 reporters close proximity to key sources of informa-
4 tion.

5 (3) Since the founding of the Department of
6 Defense, credentialed journalists have been allowed
7 to access unsecured areas of the Pentagon to con-
8 duct thorough, reliable, and timely reporting.

9 (4) From the earliest days of the Pentagon, the
10 Department has also provided credentialed journal-
11 ists with dedicated physical space, opening a com-
12 bined National Defense press room in 1948 and pro-
13 viding cubicles, desks, telephone lines, and other
14 tools for reporters to work from inside the building.

15 (5) In 1972, Secretary of Defense Melvin
16 Laird, under President Richard Nixon, designated
17 the Pentagon press space as the “Correspondents’
18 Corridor”, and said, “We here at the Department of
19 Defense firmly believe the government and the press
20 are interlocking parts of our nation’s constitutional
21 system of checks and balances. When civilian and
22 military members of this department take the oath
23 to support the Constitution of the United States,
24 that also, of course, includes the First Amend-
25 ment.”.

1 (6) Robert Sims, Assistant Secretary of De-
2 fense for Public Affairs for President Ronald
3 Reagan, endorsed the view of Secretary Laird and
4 explained that effective reporting requires access be-
5 yond press briefings because the ability to quickly
6 get the views of senior officials with “significant pol-
7 icy information” promotes the accuracy and quality
8 of reporting from the Pentagon.

9 (7) Over the course of many decades, the De-
10 partment of Defense had diligently worked to pre-
11 serve the access of reporters to the Pentagon, even
12 during extraordinary circumstances, including by en-
13 suring reporters were able to return to the Pentagon
14 within hours of the attacks of September 11, 2001,
15 and by maintaining access for reporters throughout
16 the COVID–19 pandemic.

17 (8) In a policy imposed by Secretary Hegseth in
18 2025, the Department, for the first time, restricted
19 credentialed journalists from actively “soliciting” un-
20 authorized information or engaging in activity the
21 Department considers “unprofessional”.

22 (9) In 2026, the Department announced a new
23 policy that would require journalists to work in an
24 annex facility outside the Pentagon, redesignated the
25 Pentagon Press Office as a secure space, and re-

1 quired reporters for the first time to have a military
2 escort when present anywhere within the Pentagon.

3 (10) Secretary Hegseth identified no new secu-
4 rity risk or misconduct that required such a policy.

5 (11) At the same time, the Department has
6 drastically curtailed formal live on-camera press
7 briefings with credentialed journalists.

8 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

9 It is the sense of Congress that—

10 (1) a press whose ability to investigate and pub-
11 lish is overly constrained by government regulation
12 is neither free nor vibrant;

13 (2) United States citizens have a right to better
14 understand the policies, programs, and operations
15 being pursued by the Department of Defense, the
16 objectives of the leaders of the Department, the ef-
17 fectiveness of such leadership, and how the Depart-
18 ment employs and deploys personnel and spends the
19 tax dollars of citizens;

20 (3) press access to the Pentagon informs and
21 serves the public interests described in paragraph
22 (2);

23 (4) reliable, independent, and comprehensive re-
24 porting on the Department of Defense—

1 (A) has led to policy and program changes
2 that have directly served the national interest
3 and improved the quality of life and service for
4 members of the Armed Forces;

5 (B) promotes the broad public under-
6 standing and support of the Armed Forces
7 needed to attain the national security objectives
8 of the United States; and

9 (C) requires information beyond official
10 government briefings and materials, including
11 information facilitated by the ability of report-
12 ers to work and gather news inside the Pen-
13 tagon; and

14 (5) press access to the Pentagon is essential for
15 meaningful oversight and enables reporting that in-
16 forms Congress in carrying out its legislative author-
17 ity, including by surfacing information that serves as
18 the basis for investigative inquiries, reports, hear-
19 ings, and legislation.

20 **SEC. 5. RESTORING PENTAGON PRESS ACCESS.**

21 Not later than 30 days after the date of the enact-
22 ment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall—

23 (1) restore to the press access to areas of the
24 Pentagon that were accessible to appropriately
25 credentialed journalists on May 22, 2025, including

1 the “Correspondents’ Corridor” and other des-
2 ignated press working spaces;

3 (2) restore to appropriately credentialed jour-
4 nalists unescorted access to areas of the Pentagon
5 that were accessible without an escort on May 22,
6 2025;

7 (3) require the Secretary to ensure the integrity
8 of the process to issue to reporters a Pentagon Fa-
9 cilities Alternative Credential, including by—

10 (A) designating the Pentagon Force Pro-
11 tection Agency as responsible for the security
12 review;

13 (B) ensuring that the security review de-
14 scribed in subparagraph (A) is conducted by ca-
15 reer officials without unnecessary delays, polit-
16 ical influence, or other influence by the Office
17 of Public Affairs of the Department of Defense;
18 and

19 (C) requiring that the security review de-
20 scribed in subparagraph (A) is timely, deter-
21 minative, not subject to reversal by or at the di-
22 rection of political appointees, and not subject
23 to agreement with any policy that seeks to re-
24 strict First Amendment activities; and

1 (4) prohibit any changes to press access at the
2 Pentagon, including the designation of press work
3 spaces, access areas, and press credentials, without
4 prior consultation with the Committee on Armed
5 Services of the Senate and the Committee on Armed
6 Services of the House of Representatives.

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