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CITIZEN ACTION DEFENSE FUND CHALLENGES DENIAL OF PRESS CREDENTIALS TO AWARD WINNING JOURNALIST ARI HOFFMAN

Olympia, Washington — Citizen Action Defense Fund (CADF) sent a formal letter to challenge the Washington State House of Representatives and the WA State Capitol Correspondents Association over the denial of a legislative press pass to award winning journalist Ari Hoffman, raising serious constitutional, due-process, and potential religious-discrimination concerns.

In a letter sent to Speaker of the House Laurie Jenkins, Chief Clerk Bernard Dean, and Capitol Correspondents Association representative Jerry Cornfield, CADF argues that the denial violates longstanding First Amendment protections guaranteeing freedom of the press and equal access to observe and report on government proceedings.

“The right to gather news is not a privilege granted at the discretion of political bodies or private associations,” said Jackson Maynard, CADF Executive Director and Counsel. “It is a core constitutional right. Denying a journalist access to the people’s House raises profound legal and civil rights concerns.”

The House has failed to publish clear, objective standards governing press credentials and has instead delegated that authority to a private association whose criteria, processes, and even legal status are opaque. Federal courts have repeatedly held that such vague or unpublished standards violate both the First Amendment and the Fourteenth Amendment’s due process guarantees.

The letter further notes that limiting journalists to “day passes” or gallery access does not provide equivalent reporting access, as it prevents real-time interaction with lawmakers and obstructs effective newsgathering. Courts have consistently rejected such restrictions when they are based on subjective judgments about a reporter’s viewpoints, affiliations, or perceived political involvement.

In addition to seeking immediate reconsideration of the denial, CADF submitted a formal public-records request seeking all policies, communications, and decision-making materials related to the credentialing process and Mr. Hoffman’s exclusion.

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