

## SF Chronicle video prompts White House threat

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Friday, April 29, 2011

**(04-29) 04:00 PDT Washington** -- The White House threatened Thursday to exclude The San Francisco Chronicle from pooled coverage of its events in the Bay Area after the paper posted a video of a protest at a San Francisco fundraiser for President Obama last week, Chronicle Editor Ward Bushee said. White House guidelines governing press coverage of such events are too restrictive, Bushee said, and the newspaper was within its rights to film the protest and post the video.

The White House press office would not speak on the record about the issue.

Chronicle senior political reporter Carla Marinucci was invited by the White House to cover the Obama fundraiser on April 21 on the condition that she send her written report to the White House to distribute to other reporters who did not attend. Such "pool reports" are routinely used for press coverage at White House events that are not open to the entire press corps.

### Touting new media

About 200 donors paying \$5,000 to \$38,500 each attended the event at the St. Regis Hotel in the city, a day after Obama visited Facebook headquarters in Silicon Valley touting the proliferation of "new media" breaking the confines of traditional journalism.

At the St. Regis event, a group of protesters who paid collectively \$76,000 to attend the fundraiser interrupted Obama with a song complaining about the administration's treatment of Pfc. Bradley Manning, the soldier who allegedly leaked U.S. classified documents to the WikiLeaks website.

As part of a "print-only pool," Marinucci was limited by White House guidelines to provide a print-only report, but Marinucci also took a video of the protest, which she posted in her written story on the online edition of The Chronicle at SFGate.com and on its politics blog after she sent her written pool report.

Marinucci said several other attendees, including protesters, also filmed the protest. She said she felt professionally obliged to use the same tools that private citizens were using to report on it.

Protester Craig Casey, from freshjuiceparty.com, said the RSVP on the invitation asked attendees not to take video, but he said event organizers did not stop or warn his group when members began filming video that later was widely distributed. Casey said he saw three or four members of the audience not related to his group filming the protest.

Written guidelines of the White House Correspondents Association allow print reporters to "snap pictures or take videos" as long as they provide a print report to the pool. The rule does not explicitly state whether it applies when the pool contains only print journalists or if it applies only when television crews are also present. Officials

at the group did not comment.

Print versus video

Bushee said reporters must be allowed to cover news wherever it occurs, using the tools they have.

"If something more serious had happened, would you still observe the rules?" Bushee asked. "We expect our reporters to use the reporting tools they have to cover the news, and Carla did."

The White House should re-examine its guidelines that segregate print and video, Bushee said, in an era when all news outlets use multimedia platforms. To do otherwise, he said, would ban journalists from reporting on events that non-journalists are free to cover.

The San Francisco event last week was "in a public place with hundreds of people," Bushee said. The White House policy regarding video, he said, "is objectionable and just is not in sync with how reporters are doing their jobs these days."

He also said the White House rules are "not in the spirit of what the Obama administration is trying to project" in its claims to be the most transparent administration ever.

Marinucci, whose Shaky Hand Productions video blogs with Chronicle reporter Joe Garofoli have broken new ground in political news coverage, said old rules segregating print, photography and television journalists are obsolete.

"Everyone in an audience has video capability," Marinucci said. "That's a reality. God forbid if the president was attacked, would you just let citizen journalists record the event? This is not 1987. There is no such thing as pure print anymore, and you're basically telling us we cannot record news when it happens and citizen journalists can."

Organizers of last week's fundraiser and the White House "have the right to do whatever they want to do" regarding media access, said Lowell Bergman, a professor of investigative reporting at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. He added that it is not unusual for an administration to retaliate against a news organization with whom it disagrees.

"The Nixon administration, and the Ford administration after it, barred CBS News cameras from the Pentagon and would not cooperate" with the network after CBS aired a series called "The Selling of the Pentagon," Bergman said.

"It took many years before CBS could get any cooperation out of the Pentagon after that," Bergman said. "They can clearly try to punish media outlets they don't like. ... Usually it comes back to bite them."

Push for television access

The dispute over the protest video last week follows increasing tension between the press corps and the Obama administration. Mark Knoller of CBS News has been pushing for more television access to [Obama's](#) fundraisers, which are increasing in frequency as the president begins his re-election campaign.

"President Obama has made good on his promise to have the most transparent White House in history," White House spokesman Adam Abrams said Thursday, "including routinely opening up his fundraising events to

**national and local reporters."**

**At Facebook the day before the San Francisco fundraiser, Obama said, "The main reason we wanted to do this is, first of all, because more and more people, especially young people, are getting their information through different media. And obviously, what all of you have built together is helping to revolutionize how people get information, how they process information, how they're connecting with each other."**

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*<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/04/29/MNA51J994T.DTL>*

*This article appeared on page **A - 1** of the San Francisco Chronicle*

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