

An open letter to Gov. Holcomb denouncing the Use of cease-and-desist

Indiana Pro SPJ
December 3, 2019

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Honorable Eric J. Holcomb
Governor of Indiana
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Gov. Holcomb:

The Indiana Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists takes exception to your call for the Indianapolis Star and Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting to cease and desist reporting stories about your administration's handling of worker safety investigations at Amazon facilities in Indiana.

Our organization, which represents professional journalists throughout Indiana, feels this move is a threat to press freedom.

According to Article I, section 9 of the Indiana Constitution: "No law shall be passed restraining the free interchange of thought and opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print, freely, on any subject whatever: but for the abuse of that right, every person shall be responsible."

In our view, your cease-and-desist letters, issued on Nov. 29, are designed to intimidate reporters and journalists looking into your administration. The letters also add to the overall climate in the nation that looks to undermine the credibility of journalists and media outlets.

Although you might not agree with the contents or conclusions of the report in Reveal and the Indianapolis Star, an unusual call by your office for a cease-and-desist order against the media could chill efforts to report an ongoing story.

Indiana Pro SPJ stands behind the efforts of local and national journalism outlets to report issues of public importance and hold leaders accountable. If there are disputes over accuracy, there are ways to address those concerns without issuing a cease-and-desist order.

Indiana should set an example for the rest of the nation to follow when it comes to press freedom. Our officers would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors
Indiana Professional Chapter
Society of Professional Journalists

For more information, please contact:

John Russell, chapter president

Michael Puente, chapter vice president