



# How White House press briefings usually work

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**Reporters line up in hopes of attending a briefing in Press Secretary Sean Spicer's office at the White House in Washington on Friday.**

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 24, 2017

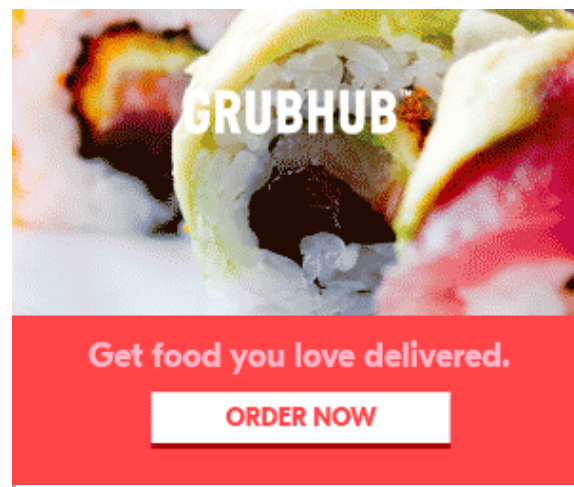
The Trump administration veered from longstanding White House protocol on Friday when it [barred](#)

multiple major media outlets from a press briefing.

So, how does press access normally work inside the White House? Here's a rundown, according to Globe reporters who have covered the White House, experts, and published reports.

Press briefings occur almost every day. Often, they are large, formal gatherings that take place on camera in the main briefing room, the James S. Brady room in the West Wing of the White House. Credentialed media members can attend those briefings, though seating is limited.

Friday's briefing with Trump spokesman Sean Spicer that some reporters were barred from attending was known in reporter parlance as a "gaggle" — a less-formal briefing held off camera but considered "on the record," meaning that what Spicer said can be quoted for publication.

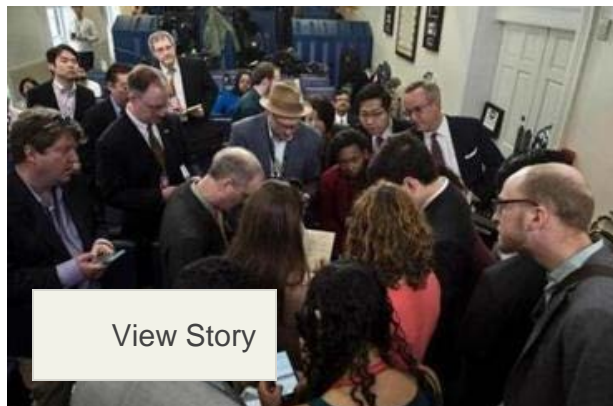


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Sometimes, gaggles are limited to a designated, smaller, rotating group or "pool" of journalists who cover a briefing and then disseminate information from the briefing to other reporters. Gaggles can be limited only to pool reporters because, for example, space is limited or the president is traveling on Air Force One.



## Media outlets blocked from White House press briefing

Reporters from CNN, the New York Times, Politico, and others were barred from attending a White House press briefing Friday.

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Friday's briefing had been scheduled to be with an "expanded pool" of reporters, according to media reports.

Normally at an expanded pool gaggle, at least one person from each news outlet would be able to attend, in addition to pool reporters.

Instead, the White House handpicked which outlets could attend the gaggle, a break with tradition.

(Originally on Friday, the White House had scheduled to hold an on-camera briefing in the Brady room, but later in the day changed it to the gaggle format that was held, according to reports.)

Outlets that said they were barred from the gaggle, which was held in Spicer's office, included: The New York Times,

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CNN, BBC, BuzzFeed, Politico, and the Los Angeles Times.

Trump has criticized CNN, The New York Times, and other media organizations as dishonest purveyors of “fake news.”

Journalists allowed to attend Friday’s briefing included the pool reporters, which on Friday consisted of Hearst Newspapers and CBS, as well as non-pool reporters from NBC, FOX, ABC, One America News Network, The Wall Street Journal, McClatchy, Breitbart, and the Washington Times, according to [Politico](#).

Reporters from the Associated Press and Time magazine were invited but boycotted in a show of solidarity with reporters from outlets that were barred, according to multiple media reports.

(The Globe, like some other outlets including [The Washington Post](#), did not have a reporter present at the time of the gaggle.)

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said: “We invited the pool so everyone was represented. We decided to add a couple of additional people beyond the pool. Nothing more than that.”

During the gaggle, Spicer said there was nothing out of the ordinary about the situation, according to a pool report, and cited past discussions about experimenting with different briefing formats. Spicer also said the president had already made lengthy remarks Friday at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

New York Times executive editor Dean Baquet [said in a statement](#): “Nothing like this has ever happened at the White House in our long history of covering multiple administrations of different parties.”

“We strongly protest the exclusion of The New York Times and the other news organizations,” the statement added. “Free media access to a transparent government is obviously of crucial national interest.”

Martha Joynt Kumar, a political science professor at Towson University in Maryland who specializes in White House communication, said press gaggles normally are “accessible to everyone.”

Kumar recalled that in previous administrations, there have been some invitation-only briefings in

the past, but those were on certain subjects: transportation specialty reporters might be invited to a briefing on a specific transportation issue, for example.

Still, politicians and presidents have long feuded with the news media.

In 2009, the Treasury Department during the Obama administration tried to exclude Fox News from a round of interviews with executive-pay czar Kenneth R. Feinberg, but the network's competitors refused to go along with that, The [New York Times reported](#) at the time.

In June of 2015, Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign [banned](#) a representative from the national print pool from attending any of her events in New Hampshire.

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