

Press Club of Cleveland
Statement on City of Cleveland Media Rules of Engagement

The following statement is from the Press Club of Cleveland Board of Directors

We're not sure how Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson will assess the state of the city at his annual address today at Public Auditorium.

We are absolutely sure that the original "Rules of Engagement" for media covering the state of the city address would have done a serious disservice to media – and more importantly to the thousands of citizens and taxpayers who depend on the media to get information about their city and their elected officials.

Those original rules, which circulated widely on social media on Tuesday, included such strictures as prohibiting interviews with attendees inside Public Auditorium (delicious irony there) with a "designated interview area" on the steps of City Hall. That is, in a word, absurd. What is more basic than reporters asking people what they think after watching an elected official make his case?

The city issued revision – this time called "background information" not "rules" – no doubt the critics on Twitter and likely some direct reaction from the media to the city had something to do with that. Interviews after the event are now allowed on the floor of Public Auditorium. And while the mayor himself still won't talk about what he said that day, the revision does make clear that he'll make himself available to the media on Thursday.

We trust reporters will use that extra time to talk to people about the state of the city address and come armed with appropriate – and tough - questions.

But we remain alarmed that *public* officials, elected by the *public* and paid by the *public* would show so little regard for the public with those original "rules."

When elected officials try to dictate news coverage, the people who ultimately are damaged are the people who read, watch and listen to that coverage.

For 128 years, The Press Club of Cleveland has provided a place for journalists, public relations, corporate communications, marketing and advertising professionals to gather and exchange ideas.

The Press Club of Cleveland continues to promote excellence in journalism, educate future journalists and maintain the rich history of journalism in Cleveland. Provocative and informative programming is scheduled throughout the year with discounts offered to Press Club members. The Press Club of Cleveland sponsors the Excellence in Journalism competition and the Cleveland Journalism Hall of Fame induction ceremonies each year.