

Say Goodbye to the Irrelevant White House Briefing Room



by Roger L. Simon

The James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, or White House briefing room, as it's sometimes called, is back in the news with the latest "scandale" (say it in French).

The most recent of the administration's porte-paroles (French again?), the exceptionally well-dressed Karine Jean-Pierre has somehow found a particularly head-scratching manner to defend Joe Biden's latest gaffe.

That's the one in which our president asked publicly at a Sept. 28 conference on hunger, nutrition, and health whether

Indiana U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, who was killed in an automobile crash in August, was present. Biden had sent his condolences at the time of her death.

Fox News—an organization with permission to enter the sacrosanct walls of the White House briefing room, more of that in a moment—had this to say of the brouhaha:

“Reporter after reporter pressed Jean-Pierre to elaborate on Biden’s remarks at that day’s briefing, but she stunned observers as she returned to the ‘top of mind’ talking point, failing to assuage multiple journalists.

“‘I just answered the question about her being top of mind,’ Jean-Pierre said at one point. ‘I don’t think that’s unusual. I feel like many of us have gone through that particular time where someone is on top of mind, and you call them out.’

“It was a striking moment for a White House press team that’s prided itself on its contrast to its predecessors, who often engaged in pitched battles with reporters eager to lace into them over former [President Trump’s controversial remarks](#).”

In lieu of “pitched battles,” what we have had most recently are generally snores. The consternation this particular response created, goofy as it is, raises a far more interesting question.

What precisely are all these journalists doing in that room every day? Is this democracy in action or pseudo-democracy?

Most importantly, are they reporting the news?

Only very rarely. For the most part, significant news has already been leaked by the administration to trusted, reliable parties—these days most often *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*—to be conveyed to the public in the proper manner with the proper spin in advance of anyone else.

What then would be the purpose of the White House briefing

room?

Basically, it's all about who gets to be there—in other words, what media companies can ask questions of the likes of Jean-Pierre and get such an illuminating response. Also, and consequentially, of great importance is where the companies are seated—up close or in the press room's metaphorical Siberia, far from the cameras.

It's about the branding.

Most of this is determined by a group called the White House Correspondents' Association—the same media cartel that brings you the annual dinner known as the “Nerd Prom.”

When I use the word cartel, it isn't accidental. Self-preservation is the order of the day and keeping the competition out by using the claim that they are yet too amateurish or too biased themselves.

They are not yet “ready.” (That was their excuse, about 15 years ago, when I, as CEO of PJMedia, asked for a seat for us in the room.)

The people in charge are the same old, same old of the media world. Here, according to [Wikipedia](#), is a listing of the current leadership:

- Officers

- President: [Steven Portnoy](#), [CBS News Radio](#)
- Vice President: [Tamara Keith](#), [NPR](#)
- Secretary: Fin Gomez, [CBS News](#)
- Treasurer: Francesca Chambers, [McClatchy Newspapers](#)

- Board members

- [Doug Mills](#), [New York Times](#)
- Justin Sink, [Bloomberg News](#)
- [Kelly O'Donnell](#), [NBC News](#)
- Karen Travers, [ABC News](#)

- Todd J. Gillman, [Dallas Morning News](#)
- Executive Director
 - Steven Thomma

Sound familiar? Do you detect a certain ideological tilt?

Where are Breitbart, The Daily Caller, or The Daily Wire on that list, not to mention a whole host of others?

The Epoch Times, growing as quickly as it is, doesn't have access to the press briefing room. Why? Because they might ask real questions?

That's probably part of it, but the larger part is media power and how the game is played. The news is hierarchical with the same companies maintaining the same seats at the table, deserved or not.

Mostly they are undeserved. There is no test of their allegiance to the truth. It doesn't seem to matter. Most of the above list signed on eagerly to the obviously false Trump–Russia accusations, as well as every pronouncement of Dr. Anthony Fauci regarding COVID-19, even, and often more adamantly, when they were contradictory.

Wittingly or unwittingly, these companies frequently tell the opposite of the truth to appease the powers that be, to be part of the club. That's their bread and butter and why they keep their places in the front rows of the White House press briefing room.

I say get rid of the ritual. It's already an irrelevant national bore.

And while we're at it, enough of the "Nerd Prom" and all its attendant self-glorification about free speech—until they practice what they preach.

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