



New England First Amendment Coalition

Phone 508.983.6006 Fax 617.860.2559 Web nefac.org
Twitter @FiveFreedoms Mailing Address 111 Milk Street, Westborough MA 01581

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Justin Silverman, Esq.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Karen Bordeleau
NEFAC President
The Providence Journal (formerly)
Michael Donoghue
First Vice President
Vermont Press Association
Robert A. Bertsche, Esq.
Second Vice President
Prince Lobel Tye, LLP (Mass.)
Lynne DeLucia
Fundraising Chairwoman
Connecticut Health I-Team
David Rosen
Communications Chairman
David Rosen Communications (Mass.)
Gregory V. Sullivan, Esq.
Clerk
Malloy & Sullivan (Mass.)

DIRECTORS
Jonathan M. Albano, Esq.
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP (Mass.)
Dan Barrett
ACLU of Connecticut
Peter Caruso, Sr., Esq.
Caruso & Caruso, LLP (Mass.)
William Chapman, Esq.
Orr & Reno (N.H.)
Linda Conway
New England Newspaper & Press Assoc.
Lia Ernst
ACLU of Vermont
Thomas Fiedler
Boston University
Edward Fitzpatrick
Roger Williams University
Richard Gagliuso, Esq.
Bernstein Shur (N.H.)
George Geers
Academy of New England Journalists
Christopher Hamblett
Barrington, R.I.
Amanda Milkovits
The Providence Journal
Maggie Mulvihill
Boston University
Jennifer Peter
The Boston Globe
Elizabeth Ritvo, Esq.
Brown Rudnick, LLP (Mass.)
Walter V. Robinson
The Boston Globe
Barbara T. Roessner
Hearst Connecticut Media Group
Sigmund D. Schutz, Esq.
Preti Flaherty (Maine)
Todd Smith
Caledonian Record (Vt.)
Mike Stanton
University of Connecticut
Emily Sweeney
The Boston Globe
Tim White
WPRI-TV Providence
Janet Wu
WCVB-TV Boston

SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO

Armando Perez
Chief of Police, Bridgeport Police Dept.
bptctpd@bridgeportct.gov

Joseph P. Ganim
Mayor, Bridgeport
mayor@bridgeportct.gov

May 10, 2019

Dear Chief Perez and Mayor Ganim,

We are writing today to denounce the arrest of Hearst Connecticut Media reporter Tara O'Neill last night while she covered a demonstration on Fairfield Avenue. O'Neill was arrested despite observing the demonstration from a public sidewalk and identifying herself as a journalist.

O'Neill is an experienced and highly respected journalist who is well-known within the Bridgeport Police Department. She reports regularly on police activity and aggressively covered the police shooting that prompted last night's demonstration. Surely her name is familiar to officers patrolling Fairfield Avenue.

We demand that the Bridgeport Police Department:

- present a full public explanation of the events leading to O'Neill's arrest;
- release the name of the arresting officer;
- issue a formal public apology, and
- review its existing policies and procedures and take corrective action to prevent any future infringement on the rights of journalists.

We also urge the department to begin a conversation with O'Neill and her newsroom associates to discuss how to foster a better working relationship. While responsible law enforcement is crucial to the well-being of our communities, so is journalism. There is simply no excuse for a journalist to be arrested for doing her job.

We call on you to be transparent about last night's events, be accountable for the actions of your department and begin working with local newsrooms to restore the public trust that was lost last night with O'Neill's arrest.

Please consider our organization a resource. NEFAC's Board of Directors includes many of New England's top media law attorneys, investigative reporters and First Amendment advocates, including Lynne Delucia of Connecticut Health Investigative Team; Dan Barrett of the ACLU of Connecticut; Barbara Roessner, former executive editor of Hearst Connecticut Media Group; and Mike Stanton, a former Providence Journal reporter and current professor at the University of Connecticut.

MAJOR SUPPORTERS INCLUDE

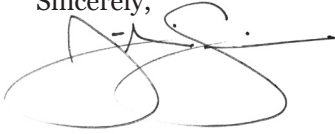


We can provide training on how to best respond to media presence and how to interact with journalists. We are experts on First Amendment law and the protections afforded to the press.

But more importantly, we are citizens who believe there is no room for baseless arrests and intimidation of journalists in our communities.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Silverman', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Justin Silverman
Executive Director



New England
First Amendment Coalition