



FLORIDA SOCIETY OF NEWS EDITORS

1025 GREENWOOD BLVD, SUITE 121 | LAKE MARY, FL 32746

(321) 283-5274 | INFO@FSNE.ORG

Dear Volusia County Sheriff Michael Chitwood and Florida Sheriff Association President Bill Leeper:

It has come to the attention of the Florida Society of News Editors, an organization representing 43 news organizations in the state, that the Volusia County Sheriff's Office has stopped notifying the Daytona Beach News-Journal of upcoming press conferences, and that it has also removed the News-Journal from its list of organizations that receive press releases.

Further, we've learned that Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood will no longer provide comment to the newspaper.

The FSNE board reacted with such concern that it felt it necessary to write this letter.

We urge the Sheriff's Office to immediately reverse its stance to try to hinder the News-Journal from doing its job. Such a decision sends the wrong message to the public, which expects government agencies to conduct matters transparently and without prejudice to the news outlets that cover them.

The Daytona Beach News-Journal has been covering Volusia County since 1883 and is the paper of record for the county. Criminal justice and public safety issues are core to the newspaper's mission of keeping its readers informed of important community matters.

We also urge the Sheriff's Office not to follow the lead of other counterparts that have dropped press conferences altogether in favor of one-way communications on social media.

Reporters must be able to ask public officials questions in a timely way to provide citizens with the coverage they have come to expect. Likewise, if the subjects of press coverage find fault with stories, it is incumbent to speak up and reach out to editorial leadership to lodge their concerns. That open communication between government and news leaders is beneficial to all.

FSNE appeals to the agency's sense of fairness and duty, and asks that the Sheriff's Office reinstate the News-Journal's access to Sheriff's Office press conferences, put the newspaper's reporters back on the press release list and any other communications channels, and treat them the same as other news outlets.

Sincerely,

Katie Sanders, FSNE President
Politifact, Managing Editor

Alex Mena, FSNE Vice President
Miami Herald, Executive Editor

Mark Katches, FSNE Secretary/Treasurer
Tampa Bay Times, Executive Editor



FLORIDA SOCIETY OF NEWS EDITORS

1025 GREENWOOD BLVD, SUITE 121 | LAKE MARY, FL 32746

(321) 283-5274 | INFO@FSNE.ORG

Dana Banker, Immediate Past President
Miami Herald, Senior Managing Editor

Board of Directors

Julie Anderson, Orlando Sentinel & South Florida Sun Sentinel Editor in Chief

Ted Bridis, University of Florida/Fresh Take Florida

Rick Christie, Palm Beach Post, Executive Editor

William Hatfield, Tallahassee Democrat, Executive Editor

Cindy McCurry-Ross, News-Press (Fort Myers), Executive Editor

Lisa Nellessen Savage, Pensacola News Journal, Executive Editor

Mary Shedden, WUSF (Tampa), News Director