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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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April 23, 2007

Rep. David Obey
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey,

It has come to the attention of the Executive Committee of Correspondents of the Congressional Radio-TV Correspondents' Galleries that television cameras will not be allowed to fully cover the House-Senate Appropriations conference committee meeting today, April 23, 2007. The Executive Committee strongly protests this action.

We've been told that TV cameras will be allowed in at the very beginning of the 4:30pm meeting to record the first few minutes. After that brief photo op, TV cameras will be forced to leave while members of the press without cameras will be allowed to stay. A House Appropriations Committee staffer said this decision was made by you and was based on precedent.

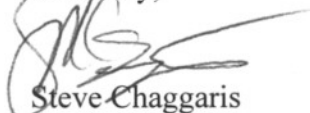
Despite the fact that there is not a space constraint in the meeting room, HC-5, and the fact that these conference committees have historically been open to all media, the Executive Committee does not understand the justification for today's restrictions.

Not only does this create an uneven playing field for the press that covers the U.S. Congress – giving full access to only some journalists – but the Executive Committee feels your action, based on precedent, per your staffer, does not live up to your own Speaker's post-election promises of transparency and that this Congress would be "the most open...Congress in history."

In addition, today's conference committee meeting is about the Iraq war, which was arguably the issue that propelled your party into the majority during last year's elections. Shouldn't the American public be allowed to see how the new Democratic Congress wants to spend taxpayers' money on this war?

Again, we just want to emphasize our strong opposition to your decision and hope that in the future, you honor the spirit of Speaker Pelosi's promise to run an open Congress.

Sincerely,



Steve Chaggarris
Chairman, Executive Committee of Correspondents
Congressional Radio-Television Correspondents' Galleries

Cc: Speaker Nancy Pelosi