

 |   
**RTDNA | RTDNF**  
**RADIO TELEVISION DIGITAL NEWS ASSOCIATION**  
**RADIO TELEVISION DIGITAL NEWS FOUNDATION**

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Michael L. Parson  
Governor  
201 West Capitol Avenue, Number 216  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Dear Governor Parson,

I write to you today as the executive director and chief operating officer of the Radio Television Digital News Association, the world's largest professional organization devoted exclusively to advocating on behalf of broadcast and digital journalists' ability to serve their communities by providing valuable information – particularly in times of extreme crisis, such as is the case with the current COVID-19 pandemic. We represent dozens of newsroom managers and employees throughout the state of Missouri.

I also write to you as a Missouri native with a large number of relatives living in the Show Me State – and as the former news director of KTTS Radio in Springfield, where I had many occasions to cover you when you served as sheriff of Polk County. Based on my personal experience in that regard, I know that effective and meaningful public service is an invaluable principle to you.

During times of wide-spread emergency, particularly catastrophic public health crises, citizens have a critical need for timely, accurate information. Journalists play an essential role in that process, by asking questions on behalf of the people in the communities they serve.

I have heard from a number of our members in Missouri that either you or someone in your office has decided not to allow journalists to attend your public briefings regarding COVID-19. They are permitted to email questions to your office in advance, but it is a state employee – and not journalists – who decides which questions you answer during your briefings. Also, I'm told there is no opportunity for journalists to ask follow-up questions.

On behalf of our members and, more important, the communities they serve, I respectfully ask – no, implore – you to allow journalists to ask you questions, and follow-ups, at your COVID-19 briefings. I know your office has declined such requests from the Missouri Broadcasters Association and Missouri Press Association. That said, I sincerely hope that you will reconsider, and give thoughtful contemplation to this appeal.

The Sheriff Mike Parson I remember would have. I sincerely hope that you, as governor, will yield to your sense of public service and goodwill and expand the public's access to vital COVID-19 information by granting greater access to its surrogates – journalists – during your daily briefings and otherwise.

Please stay safe!

Best Regards,



Executive Director  
Chief Operating Officer