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**Media Coalition Calls on Congress to Enact the Journalist Protection Act**

WASHINGTON — In times of polarization in our society, the demand for credible, reliable news and information about what the government is doing has never been greater. Journalists certainly have thick skin, but it is clear those who inform the public are under increased threat of harm while doing their jobs. Forty-eight journalists faced physical attacks while gathering and reporting the news in 2018, as documented by the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker. More than two dozen newsrooms have received hoax bomb threats, disrupting their operations. Online harassment of journalists has included death threats and threats of sexual and other physical violence. Not only is the role of the news media in our democracy under attack, but the safety of individual journalists is threatened. For these reasons, NMOG supports the Journalist Protection Act, introduced today by Representative Eric Swalwell (CA-15), Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and urges Congress to pass this bill into law.

The anti-press rhetoric in recent years has increasingly threatened press freedom. Journalists have had to endure being called the “enemy of the people” and proprietors of “fake news,” and this language has a direct impact on the ability of reporters to do their jobs and gather information for the public. The Journalist Protection Act would ensure that journalists receive the same treatment as others if attacked and would give federal prosecutors the power to prosecute those who attack journalists when local prosecutors have increasingly declined to pursue a criminal case.

“A journalist should not have to worry about threats of harassment or physical attacks solely for doing their jobs and informing the public,” said Coalition Director Melissa Wasser. “The Journalist Protection Act would not elevate journalists to a special status, but rather would ensure they receive the same protections if attacked while gathering and reporting the news.”

We thank Rep. Swalwell, Sen. Blumenthal, Sen. Menendez, and the many co-sponsors of the Journalist Protection Act for standing up to defend the freedom of the press in the United States. The safety of journalists is not a partisan issue, nor should it become one. We look forward to working with Members of Congress and other influential voices in society to defend and protect those who keep the public informed and the free flow of information in our democracy.