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My IN OPINION...

By Jane Dvorak, APR, Fellow PRSA

We can't afford to see the press as the enemy

A free press is anything but an enemy of the public. In fact, to say so is an affront to our Constitution. As a PR pro, this is especially concerning to me, as the First Amendment is at the core of all that we do. The free flow of information is essential to democracy and that is why I believe we must stand up when such outrageous statements are being made.

I hate to think of living in a country without the rights our Constitution provides, and one of the most sacred is protection of a free press. A free press brings access to information to people throughout the world, and the opportunity for them to make informed decisions based on both the opinions of trusted commentators, and reporting that is put through multiple editorial filters.

It is incumbent upon all of us in this digital age to be fact checkers. As professional communicators operating under a code of ethics, we know that the free flow of information is essential. But we must ensure the information being shared is honest and accurate. We can do this by reading and listening to a variety of media outlets and checking suspect headlines via Snopes or another such fact checking sources.

A free press holds accountable leaders, companies, organizations. The importance of respectful, civil dialogue is foundational to our society and is enhanced and nurtured by a robust media. This doesn't mean you can't have a differing opinion, but it does mean we need to hold ourselves accountable to hearing varying views, being respectful of those views and finding points of agreement, not difference, to move forward productively.

As a PR practitioner charged with communicating information of companies and associations, the press plays an integral part to the work we do. We have an obligation to speak up when we are aware of blatant lies, misrepresentation of the facts or an obstruction of the free flow of information. These are the values and a code of ethics that I, as a public relations professional, adhere to. Pure and simple, #ethicsmatter.

As a leader in the communications profession, I support a free press and the constitutional rights that come with that role. I hope that is true for all individuals. For these reasons, I stand proudly with my journalist peers, those who strive to impart the information we need to be informed citizens. Anything less would undermine our democracy. It's time we all stood up and expected more from our leaders ...at least in my opinion.

NOTE: Today, August 16, the media took action to stand up for itself in great numbers to say we are not the enemy of the people.

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