



## Radio Television Digital News Association

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### **BROADCAST AND DIGITAL JOURNALISTS CALL ON CONGRESS TO REINTRODUCE AND PASS JOURNALIST PROTECTION ACT FOLLOWING MURDER OF FLORIDA JOURNALIST**

*Safety remains a primary concern for journalists as nine have been murdered in the U.S. since 2015*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 13, 2023)** — The Radio Television Digital News Association has sent letters to Florida’s Congressional delegation asking it to reintroduce and take the lead in passing the Journalist Protection Act (JPA) during the 118th Congress.

The letter was sent to Senators Rick Scott and Marco Rubio, and Representatives Matt Gaetz, Neal Dunn, Kat Cammack, Aaron Bean, John Rutherford, Michael Waltz, Cory Mills, Bill Posey, Darren Soto, Maxwell Frost, Daniel Webster, Gus M. Bilirakis, Anna Paulina Luna, Kathy Castor, Laurel Lee, Vern Buchanan, Greg Steube, Scott Franklin, Byron Donalds, Sheila Cherfilus McCormick, Brian Mast, Lois Frankel, Jared Moskowitz, Frederica Wilson, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Mario Diaz-Balart, María Elvira Salazar and Carlos Gimenez.

The legislation, first introduced in 2018, would make it a federal crime to intentionally intimidate or cause bodily harm to a journalist or media organization in the course of newsgathering or reporting. It would also allow the Justice Department to prosecute those who intimidate or assault journalists when local prosecutors decline to do so.

“We need Congress to act now. It is a dangerous time to be a journalist in America,” said Dan Shelley, President and CEO of the Radio Television Digital News Association. “Years of anti-journalist rhetoric trumpeted by those in power has caused a dramatic and disturbing increase in attacks on the media. Unfortunately our members are increasingly at risk of serious harm.”

In late February, Dylan Lyons, a reporter for Spectrum News 13, was murdered and photojournalist Jesse Walden was severely injured by a gunman while reporting from a crime scene in Orlando, Florida. Lyons became the ninth journalist in the United States since 2015 to be murdered for doing his job.

“In light of Dylan’s tragic death, we encourage the Congressional delegation from Florida to do the right thing and move to protect all journalists,” Shelley said. “We cannot change the circumstances that led to Dylan’s murder, but by reintroducing the Journalist Protection Act, Congress has the ability to stand behind the hundreds of other journalists who seek and report the truth on behalf of the public day after

day and send a message that it isn't OK for them to be intimidated or harmed simply by showing up for work."

The Journalist Protection Act is a public declaration in support of the work of journalists, and a clear rebuke of those who have perpetrated violence against the industry. It does not offer journalists preferred status, but recognizes the risks taken by them every day to serve the democracy of the United States. No journalist should fear for their life simply for reporting the news.

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#### **About the Radio Television Digital News Association**

The Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) is the world's largest professional organization devoted exclusively to broadcast and digital journalism. Founded as a grassroots organization in 1946, RTDNA's mission is to promote and protect responsible journalism.