

# First Amendment Lawyer: Courts Should Protect Media from Trump Threats

President Donald Trump's threats against NBC for news coverage he didn't like are not unprecedented, says Dallas First Amendment lawyer **Paul C. Watler** of **Jackson Walker LLP**.

On Wednesday, after NBC reported that sources said Trump raised the idea of increasing the U.S. nuclear arsenal, the president tweeted: "With all of the Fake News coming out of NBC and the Networks, at what point is it appropriate to challenge their License? Bad for country!"

"There is a long history of American presidents criticizing the coverage they receive in the press," said Watler. "There is an equally long history of American journalists doing their jobs despite presidential disfavor.

"A few presidents, most notoriously Richard Nixon, actually attempted to turn their dislike of the media into official retaliation by government agencies or regulators. But those vengeful efforts at official harassment were abject failures.

"The First Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press stands as a fundamental bar to the type of vindictive action that the current president seems to contemplate or encourage. As long as we have federal judges who are true to their oaths to uphold the Constitution, media organizations should be protected from efforts to intimidate or subvert independent news reporting."

Watler, a commercial litigator, has represented numerous news media organizations over the years in First Amendment and libel matters.

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