

IF THE GOVERNMENT KNOCKS ON YOUR DOOR

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A JOURNALIST

STAY CALM

You are protected by the First Amendment (freedom of the press) and the Fourth Amendment (protection against unreasonable searches and seizures).

- Do not open the door immediately.
- Ask who they are, what agency they represent, and why they are there.
- Request to see official identification through a window, camera, or under the door.
- Step outside and close the door behind you if you choose to speak.

You are not required to let officers inside without legal authority.

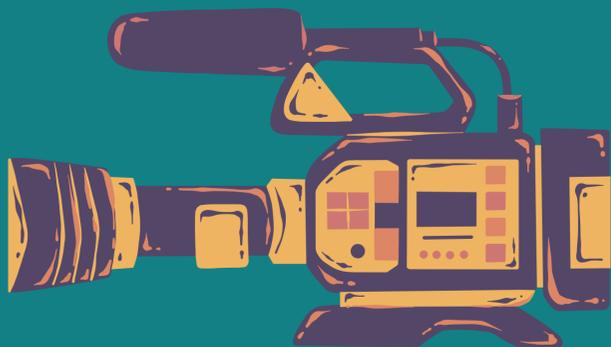


Ask Clearly: "Do You Have a Warrant?"

Under the Fourth Amendment, officers generally cannot enter your home without:

- A warrant signed by a judge, or
- Your voluntary consent, or
- A true emergency (immediate danger or destruction of evidence).
- If they do not have a warrant:
- State clearly: "I do not consent to a search."
- Do not argue — just repeat your refusal calmly.

If they claim exigent circumstances, do not physically interfere — document everything.



Review the Warrant Carefully

If they present one, check:

- Your correct name and address
- Judge's signature
- Specific items authorized to be seized
- Legal basis for the search

You have the right to read it.



Assert Press Protections Immediately

State clearly:

"I am a journalist. These are protected press materials."

The Privacy Protection Act of 1980 (PPA) provides heightened protection for:

- Work product (notes, drafts, recordings)
- Documentary materials (photos, videos, memory cards)

These generally cannot be searched or seized unless tied to a crime you allegedly committed.



Resources

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

Phone: 800-336-4243 if a journalist has been arrested or faces an imminent threat of arrest.

Committee to Protect Journalists (Help)

Emergencies: emergencies@cpj.org

cpj.org/legal-hotline/ (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. ET)

