

Oct. 19, 2026

Chairman Jason Smith
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

cc: Members of House Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Chairman Smith,

We are a coalition of press freedom and civil liberties organizations. We are alarmed by your recent correspondence [threatening](#) to issue subpoenas to BreakThrough News, a nonprofit organization that publishes news reporting and commentary. Your letter indicates that you plan to demand that virtually every individual associated with BreakThrough's newsroom, from its editor-in-chief to its social media manager, appear before Congress unless BreakThrough rescinds its well-founded First Amendment and other objections to your prior invasive demands.

The Committee first demanded records from BreakThrough in February, claiming to be pursuing a tax-related probe into donations from Neville Roy Singham, a U.S. citizen based in Shanghai. Those demands and subsequent ones were outrageous in and of themselves, but serially subpoenaing employees of a small left-wing news outlet to compel them to personally appear before you, for no reason other than to further a vindictive political stunt, is beyond the pale and reminiscent of some of the darkest chapters in our nation's history.

Although your justifications have repeatedly shifted in your various letters and subpoenas to date, you have admitted the true impetus for the inquiry is the groups' viewpoints, stating they have "amplified anti-American, foreign-aligned narratives on social media, and pushed messaging that mirrors hostile government propaganda." You further stated, "I will absolutely not stand by and allow our tax code to be abused to push anti-American rhetoric on our home soil."

The First Amendment protects those who voice even controversial opinions shared by hostile governments abroad, but your primary examples of BreakThrough's "anti-American" views are criticism of ICE's tactics and Israel's U.S.-funded wars – policies that many millions of Americans who have never received funding from or even heard of Mr. Singham also dislike. The fact that foreigners also dislike those policies might underscore their unpopularity, but it does not diminish BreakThrough's right to share similar views.

Your letter also raises BreakThrough's alleged connections to a lawfully organized domestic political party, the Party for Socialism and Liberation. Such connections are not illegal and, like receiving donations from a U.S. citizen living abroad, cannot come close to supporting broad subpoenas seeking a news entity's internal documents or depositions from its entire staff.

Beyond the blatant unconstitutionality of targeting news outlets for their political views, House subpoenas must serve a [legislative purpose](#). Fishing expeditions do not suffice.

BreakThrough News's reporting and commentary, no matter how distasteful you may find it, is protected by the First Amendment, just as your own views are protected no matter how distasteful others may find them. As the Supreme Court [wrote](#) over 80 years ago, "if there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion."

The First Amendment exists to protect people with politically disfavored views from people like you. Speech that politicians approve of is not in need of constitutional protection.

The threatened subpoenas are clearly designed to target BreakThrough for reporting and editorial viewpoints with which the Committee disagrees. Subpoenas of journalists and newsrooms obstruct First Amendment activity by forcing cash-strapped news outlets to spend time and money defending their rights, and by intimidating not only reporters but also sources, donors, and readers.

We demand that you refrain from issuing further unlawful and retaliatory subpoenas, and drop your entire unconstitutional inquiry into BreakThrough News.

Sincerely,

Freedom of the Press Foundation
American Society of Journalists and Authors
Defending Rights & Dissent
First Amendment Foundation
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)
PEN America
Society of Environmental Journalists
Society of Professional Journalists
The Media and Democracy Project