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A Win for Independent Media: NYPD Hands Over Previously Denied Press Credentials

By [Alex Kane](#)
January 10, 2009 | Posted in [IndyBlog](#) | [Email this article](#) [hide](#)

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Three independent journalists who are suing the New York Police Department and the city over the NYPD's [system for granting press credentials](#) have received previously denied credentials in a partial victory for the plaintiffs, according to a recently released press statement.

But the journalists and prominent civil rights attorney [Norman Siegel](#) plan to press on with the federal lawsuit, continuing to insist that the NYPD's system for granting credentials to journalists is unconstitutional and arbitrary. Siegel and the plaintiffs are also continuing to question why it is that the police department is the agency responsible for issuing press credentials.

"This is an important first step but only a first step. We still need to address the constitutional problems in the system of granting press credentials in New York City that has run amuck and needs to be changed immediately," Siegel said in the press release. He [told the New York Times](#) [that](#) "this step recognizes that bloggers are 21st-century journalists."

The federal lawsuit states that the city's actions "have resulted in unconstitutional and unlawful interference with and prevention of news coverage in New York City and beyond," and that the criteria for getting city-issued press credentials is "unconstitutionally vague."

David Wallis, Rafael Martinez-Alequin and Ralph E. Smith—the plaintiffs in the lawsuit—had their applications for press credentials denied in 2007 without, they say, adequate explanation.

Wallis is a long-time freelance and online journalist who has contributed to a wide range of publications including the New York Times, The New Yorker, Esquire, and the Village Voice and has held press credentials on and off since 1994. Wallis is the founder of [Featurewell.com](#), which provides news organizations worldwide the opportunity to purchase articles and photographs from the materials featured on the website. Wallis said he continues to write for both the traditional print media as well as online-only publications.

Martínez-Alequin is a longtime independent print and online journalist who published the Brooklyn Free Press from 1983 to 2003 and said he held credentials off and on for nearly 20 years. In 2003, Martínez-Alequin switched to publishing online only and renamed the publication to be the New York City Free Press. He also writes on a related blog, [yourfreepress.blogspot.com](#).

Smith publishes [GuardianChronicle.com](#), a blog that focuses primarily on law enforcement issues, community groups and youth in the city. He is currently a Public Information Officer for the New York City Corrections Department.

The city is set to respond to the lawsuit on January 16.

To read an earlier piece about the lawsuit in the Independent, click [here](#).

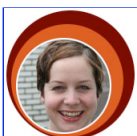
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One Response to “A Win for Independent Media: NYPD Hands Over Previously Denied Press Credentials”

Amy Says:

[January 11th, 2009 at 7:35 pm](#)

I am constantly impressed that Norman Siegel is always fighting the most important battles, to find out more, here is a good bio that includes other folks who he represents.

<http://normansiegel.com/bio>

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