



AGENDA

**SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

DATE: JUNE 27, 2020

TIME: NOON, EDT

JOIN VIA ZOOM AT [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/85283880625](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85283880625)

(Meeting ID #852 8388 0625)

1. Call to order – Newberry
2. Roll call – Aguilar
 - Patricia Gallagher Newberry
 - Matt Hall
 - Rebecca Aguilar
 - Lauren Bartlett
 - Erica Carbajal
 - Tess Fox
 - Taylor Mirfendereski
 - Mike Reilley
 - Yvette Walker
 - Andy Schotz (parliamentarian)
3. Approval of minutes from April 18, 2020, board meeting.
4. President's report
5. Executive director's report
6. EIJ2020 update
7. Financial update
8. Strategic Planning update

9. Public comment and questions

10. Reports:

Committees:

- Awards & Honors
- Diversity
- Ethics
- Freedom of Information (2)
- J-Education
- Legal Defense Fund
- Membership (2)
- Nominations
- Regional Coordinators

Communities:

- International

11. Proposals

- Database Forum
- Badges

Enter Executive Session

12. Personnel matter: Executive director's six-month self-assessment

13. Awards: Selection of winners for awards to be presented at EIJ

Exit Executive Session

14. Adjournment

MINUTES
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE AND VIDEO CONFERENCE

3 p.m. EDT
April 18, 2020

DRAFT

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The public meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m. EDT. Those present were Patricia Gallagher Newberry, president; Matthew Hall, president-elect; Rebecca Aguilar, secretary-treasurer; Lauren Bartlett, director at-large; Tess Fox, director at-large; Taylor Mirfendereski, director at-large; Mike Reilley, director at-large. Directors At-Large Erica Carbajal and Yvette Walker. Also present were Andy Schotz, parliamentarian; and staff members John Shertzer, executive director; Jake Koenig, controller; and Jennifer Royer, director of communications and marketing.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Bartlett made a motion to go into executive session. Reilley seconded. The board entered executive session at 3:07 p.m. EDT to discuss awards selections, a legal matter, contract matters regarding the Excellence in Journalism conference and the database and personnel matters.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

The board exited executive session at 4:35 p.m. EDT and the public portion of the meeting began at 4:46 p.m. EDT.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bartlett had two corrections to the minutes from the Feb. 1 board meeting. On Page 1 under the Executive Director Report, there is a typo in her last name in the second sentence of the report. On Page 3 under the First Quarter FY20 Report the description of Sue Kopen-Katcef should be changed from “member of the public” to “chair of SPJ’s Awards & Honors Committee.”

Bartlett made a motion to approve the Feb. 1 minutes with the above edits. Walker seconded. Motion passed.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Newberry summarized her report saying it was focused mostly on financials. She said we acknowledge we have a deficit budget proposed for the current fiscal year, but explained that this year we moved to a calendar year budget from a July to June budget, so it is really an apples to oranges comparison to look at last year compared to this year. She explained that there are two budgets prepared – one that includes the Excellence in Journalism conference and Sigma Delta Chi Awards banquet happening as planned, and another budget that accounts for those two events being canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first reflects a budget deficit of \$129,000; the second a deficit of \$188,000. She

referenced the request SPJ made to the SPJ Foundation at its meeting earlier that morning and said the Foundation heard SPJ out, and SPJ is to come back to the Foundation board May 9 with a more detailed proposal.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Shertzer said he is excited to be a part of SPJ and after 4½ months on the job, he appreciates the board helping him think through ways he can help the organization. He shared a crisis management plan for the next three months as SPJ responds and continues to do business during the COVID-19 pandemic. He then referenced the database discussion that occurred in executive session. Newberry said she would entertain a motion about the database.

Reilley made a motion to accept the contract as outlined in executive session with Impexium. Reilley said he knows of a few other journalism organizations that use it and thinks it will be a good partner in building a robust database. Bartlett seconded.

When asked about the timeline for implementation, Shertzer said it would likely take four to six months to implement. He expected to be cleared by SPJ's attorneys to sign the contract Monday, and an announcement would be made closer to implementation. Bartlett said she knows we use the membership database to pull names of members for voting purposes and we need to ensure we can get accurate information from the database we have to use at that time, whether the old one or the new one.

Motion passed.

EIJ20 REPORT

Newberry said as you all know, we start planning for the next year's EIJ as soon as the old one is done, so planning for EIJ20 began in the fall for EIJ20, scheduled for Sept. 10-12 in Washington, D.C. The schedule of events is coming together, producers, names of guests, solid ideas on super sessions are all on course. But there is a new reality and we have some decisions looming in the very near future. She asked Shertzer to outline the considerations we need to think about as we move closer to EIJ20.

Shertzer said things are moving quickly and changing daily. Right now, it is the events in July that we're seeing getting canceled in the association world. We are still watching and waiting regarding events in September. We do have a contract with the hotel and do not have insurance to cover an event of this nature, so we have to move smartly in how we approach this, he said. We are working closely with our partners at RTDNA to see what the landscape provides over the next few weeks and we will work with them in making a decision.

Newberry said there are financial considerations at play if we cancel or postpone, or if the conference is held virtually. Membership will be notified as soon as a decision is made. She added that we can cancel up to the day before EIJ20 is to begin and the penalty would be the same, so we don't have to rush to a decision.

As for future EIJ dates and locations, Shertzer said EIJ21 is still on for New Orleans. Decisions beyond that are on hold until we see through this period before EIJ20. We don't want to obligate ourselves to anything in the future until we know what is going to happen with EIJ20. That being said, we are

considering and have gathered information on locations on the West Coast, Midwest, South and Chicago so far. Traveling for site visits isn't something we are doing yet either.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Shertzer pointed the board to a couple of high-level overview documents in the board packet and explained there are 20 chapters in total that are on the inactivated list and three new chapters. Bartlett said she would like to put a pause on deactivating chapters until the next board meeting so we can make one more effort to reach them.

Caroline Escobar, membership and chapters manager, outlined all the outreach that has been done to this point to try to find someone who is interested in keeping each chapter going.

Bartlett made a motion to activate the three new chapters. Reilley seconded.

During discussion, Escobar explained that letters and emails have been sent to everyone we have on file with each chapter. The number of inactive chapters went from 56 down to 20 through those efforts. Regional Coordinators have reached out to those campus chapters without any luck. Newberry asked if it is easy for a chapter to come back once it is deactivated. Escobar said yes, and we're making it as simple as possible – especially now. To reactivate a chapter, the chapter needs to meet, hold an election, make sure officers are on file with headquarters, select an adviser and update their bylaws.

Bartlett said if an adviser is no longer at a school, we should reach out to the dean or associate dean. It's worth the extra effort, she said, because we don't want to deactivate chapters if we can avoid it.

Bartlett's motion was on the floor to table the deactivation of chapters until the June board meeting. Reilley seconded. Motion passed.

Shertzer said the current membership is 5,560, which is a couple hundred less than a year ago. He reminded the board that our membership is a snapshot in time because we have rolling anniversary dates for members. So, the number fluctuates based on several factors.

Bartlett said the board has discussed in the past the membership committee working on an updated value proposition. We should talk about a couple of things we don't often talk about: the work the LDF committee does and the ethics hotline. She would like the membership committee to come back in June with a recommended value proposition.

Colin DeVries, Membership Committee chair, said the committee has made a list of benefits and is trying to figure out ways to market those more.

Bartlett asked about the dues waiver. Escobar said the waiver is normally for six months, but it has been extended to a year. It is handled on a case-by-case basis. For new members, Escobar recommends offering Auto Dues, which is less than \$7 a month. She said she has never had someone tell her they want to be a member but can't afford auto dues.

Bartlett made a motion to extend the dues waiver to one year. Hall seconded. Motion passed.

PARTNERSHIPS

Shertzer said the budget line for partnerships declined a little with us losing some association management clients. But one strategy to seek more revenue would be to add new partnerships and clients. Newberry said she wouldn't put seeking external clients at 1. Or 2. On the list at the moment, but we should revisit this from time to time.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE REPORT

Hall said the task force paused meeting when the pandemic hit and people's work and home lives changed. They had completed focus groups among segments of members (pro, grads, students, retirees) and narrowed the focus to five themes:

1. Membership (diversity and youth)
2. Education and training
3. Advocacy, lobbying and FOI
4. Diversity
5. Financial Growth and Stability

The group was able to meet and discuss the first two, then the pandemic hit. When they reconvene, they will go back to the first two and assess how things may have changed and will then move on to the other three.

SPONSORSHIP TASK FORCE

Nerissa Young, chair of the Sponsorship Task Force, first gave kudos to HQ staff for everything they have been doing about COVID, including putting information onto the website, in Leads and on social media. "It's been awesome," she said.

Young pointed the board to the proposal in the board packet and explained that the proposal doesn't automatically reject any sponsor, but the board can accept or reject them. Hall made a motion to accept the proposal as the committee recommended. Aguilar seconded. In discussion, Bartlett said she is still bothered by the proposal because it does not make any suggestions about how the national convention could be funded if sponsors are rejected. Young said the task force's charge was to mainly develop suggestions for a process that helps us decide who is appropriate for SPJ to be aligned with. Hall said there is a disconnect between national, regions and chapters that we should be aware of. Unionization of newsrooms is one example where national may have one stance on it, but a chapter may have a different stance. The recommended policy doesn't tilt one way or another politically and it is designed to apply to all potential sponsors equally. It was largely modeled after ONA's policy, which is one of the most successful ones. Bartlett said unlike ONA, we usually have partners for our conventions and this could severely hinder our ability to attract new partners.

Hall made a motion to accept the proposal. Aguilar seconded. Motion passed (with Reilley being the only no).

FINANCE REPORT

Newberry explained again that two budgets were created – one that includes EIJ and the SDX Awards banquet and one that does not. Shertzer directed the board to the budget memo in the board packet.

Since SPJ has moved to a calendar year budget cycle, he is asking the board to approve a budget for the current, 2020 budget year and will come back again shortly with a 2021 budget proposal.

Newberry said on the revenue side, membership used to be the No. 1 revenue producer for SPJ. But Facebook and Google contracts were moved from the Foundation to SPJ, which provided a big infusion of funds (\$448,000). On the expense side, Newberry said there are also some direct expenses related to the contracts as well. She said we will have to make do with whichever budget we approve (and that Shertzer inherited), but the good news is Shertzer will have more control over the next one and can find ways to bring in new revenue and do new things.

Hall asked what action is wanted today, since it seems we are kind of boxed in because we won't make a decision on EIJ20 for weeks.

Shertzer said the board could hold off until June to approve one of the budgets, or they could approve both and treat them as contingency budgets. Jake Koenig, controller, said the only things that would change would be the EIJ and SDX banquet revenue and expenses.

Hall made a motion to approve both budgets on contingency. Bartlett seconded.

Koenig said revenue projection should increase a little due to association management payments that are coming in. He added that the entire staff helped put together the budget and approached it from a conservative standpoint. Koenig said board expenses should go down because of less travel due to COVID-19, and staff travel will decrease if the annual conference is canceled and there is no travel at the end of the year.

Hall made a motion to approve both budgets contingent on the decisions made regarding the Sigma Delta Chi Awards banquet and Excellence in Journalism 20. Bartlett seconded. Reilley abstained. Motion passed.

Shertzer said the auditors completed their review and it was a clean audit. The Finance Committee was able to ask questions of the auditors. Koenig explained that the audit was for tax returns on the first six months of 2019, noting that since we are moving to a calendar year budget, the next audit will be for 18 months – the last half of 2019 and the 2020 calendar year.

Bartlett said in the past, audits were shared with the executive committee first. Since we no longer have an executive committee, the report should be made to the board in executive session first, then shared with the finance committee.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee reports can be found in the board meeting materials. Briefly, Sue Kopen Katcef said in her Awards Committee report that the CCC awards were popular and successful. During the Ethics Committee report it was discussed that more marketing of the ethics hotline is needed. The Journalism Education Committee created video lessons to make available to teachers for remote learning during the pandemic and beyond. Hagit Limor said the Legal Defense Fund Committee has already had a busy six months, with 36 cases coming through since convention and two more coming in since she wrote the report. Colin DeVries said the Membership Committee will look at ways beyond membership drives to expand membership. The committee plans to work with chapter leaders and use a great list of ideas that

former committee chair Robyn Davis Sekula put together. Aguilar said there is not much of a push for applicants or nominations for Diversity Fellows program because of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and whether there will be an EIJ20 in September.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

David Zahniser, president of the Los Angeles chapter and staff writer for the Los Angeles Times, said he appreciates the information SPJ has been sending out related to resources during the pandemic. He said he knows many journalists dealing with furloughs and shut downs during the crisis and he wanted to let the board know what is happening because he knows SPJ tracks it and cares deeply.

Newberry said she appreciates hearing from someone in a market that is so affected.

ADJOURNMENT

Reilley motioned to adjourn, Bartlett seconded. Motion unanimously passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m. EDT.

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 27, 2020
To: SPJ Board of Directors and SPJ Members
From: Patricia Gallagher Newberry, SPJ President
Re: SPJ Updates

Hello all –

SPJ is juggling multiple priorities at present, through a year shaped by the pandemic, protests and politics.

- As I write, four days before our June 27 meeting, we are preparing an announcement about our annual Excellence in Journalism conference, originally set for Sept. 10-12 in Washington, D.C. I am hopeful that we will be able to present a much clearer picture during the meeting.
- We will also all know the results of our annual SDX Awards competition by today's meeting. Our staff has been hard at work turning the usual in-person awards event into an online celebration. We will unveil the winners at noon EST Friday, with CNN Political Correspondent Abby Phillip as guest host.
- We've selected five Fellows of the Society for 2020, and are thrilled to report each agreed to participate in our fall conference. We expect to release those names very soon.
- We devoted considerable conversation to SPJ's FY2020 operating budget during our last meeting on April 18. You'll recall that Executive Director John Shertzer and Controller Jake Koenig projected an annual deficit of about \$129,000 at that time. This meeting packet does not include additional financial reports – those will come at our September board meeting – but does include information about our financial progress since April.
- Related, in April, the board voted to request support from the SPJ Foundation for our budget crunch. In response, on May 9, SPJF voted to allocate \$198,700 to the Society to support a new Director of Education position. John quickly recruited for the position and is now reviewing 65 applicants for the job.
- Our rebranded "Day of Giving Back" of April 30 brought in about \$40,000 to support journalists in need, with 141 grants of up to \$500 each now distributed. Thanks to SPJ Directors Yvette Walker and Taylor Mirfendereski for serving on that committee.
- In May, we settled a lingering issue in Region 10, related to misappropriation of regional funds. The involved individual has already begun repayment of the \$45,721 owed to the region.

As spring turns to summer, SPJ continues to react to this most unusual of years.

- We continue to expand resources – for covering COVID-19, civil activism and political races, among other topics – in the Journalist’s Toolbox. Most recently, Board Director Mike Reilley, who runs the site, gave the JT a snazzy new front page. You’ll be hearing more from him and SPJ Web Administrator Billy O’Keefe soon about all the new bells and whistles.
- We continue to produce original webinars. In recent weeks, we added programs featuring Jorge Ramos of Univision, Brian Stelter of CNN and Maria Ressa of Rappler to our archives. (My personal fav, however, might just be one titled College Media Revenue Reversal, produced by Region 3 Coordinator Michael Koretzky. Not as much star power, but tons of practical ideas for helping student media, a priority of my day job.)
- We continue to promote other happenings in journalism. Our calendar of events has become a true go-to – and allowed us to serve members as we expand our connections to other journalism groups.
- We continue to join conversations on issues of the day. I’m particularly pleased that we’ve signed on to multiple statements (and been quoted in multiple stories) calling on police and protestors to respect the role of journalists covering Black Lives Matter stories. I was pleased, too, to moderate an online discussion June 20 about the need to increase diversity in newsroom, hosted by our New England chapter, and to accept an invitation for a similar online event on July 9 with our Cincinnati chapter.

Finally, two requests and a thank you:

- If you lead a chapter (professional or student) and failed to submit your annual report, please please please take care of that. That is a key tool for HQ and your board members to know what’s going on (or not going on) with chapters.
- If you aspire to national leadership, please please please write me at pattinewberryspj@gmail.com or President-Elect Matt Hall at smallhalls@gmail.com! We are, at present, short of candidates for the board and Regional Coordinators. Matt and I would be most happy to talk with you about the possibilities.
- Thanks, thanks and thanks again – to members of the board, for helping make many hard decisions this year; for members of the staff, for nimble response to the many challenges of the year; and for members across the country, for turning to us and staying with us as we all work together to promote and protect journalism.

As always, be sure to visit spj.org for further information and links.

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 27, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: John Shertzer, Executive Director

Re: SPJ Executive Director Report

It's been a rapid couple of months since we last met in April. However, I think it's been an extraordinarily productive month. We've continued to manage major disruptions in our workflow, events, and contracts because of COVID-19. In addition, we have tried to be responsive to the protests and discussion on race issues taking place in our world right now.

At our last meeting, I shared a crisis response plan and below is a summary of where we stand:

1. Focus staff and the membership committee on strategies to reduce the strain on membership retention and growth.

The membership committee has indeed held discussions on what to do amid the economic downturns brought forward by the pandemic. Colin's group is developing recommendations on how to better engage members, especially our college members, so that we can at least see strong retention. We have also produced a plan to contact lapsed members from the last 2-3 years and encourage them to "join the effort" in defending journalism.

2. Monitor conditions impacting upcoming events and if circumstances dictate empower staff to strategically withdraw us from our contractual obligations for EIJ and SDX events with little to no financial penalty.

We have withdrawn from the contract with the National Press Club for the SDX awards, and there was no financial penalty. We submitted a cancellation letter to the Washington Hilton for EIJ enacting force majeure. We cautiously hope that the hotel will agree, and we won't need to have any further negotiations.

3. Request staff and the awards committee to devise a way to effectively honor our award winners.

We have done several things in this area in consultation with the Awards Committee. An online SDX awards announcement will take place on June 26. We are also honoring our New America and MOE-y overall winner at the same event. We placed phone calls to all Fellows of the Society and will be honoring them at our fall conference. Overall, I feel we've done the best we can to make our award winners feel properly honored.

4. ED and Board Officers outline the procedures for 2020 elections and house of delegates proceedings.

This will be part of our discussion at the June board meeting. We are proceeding with online elections and have figured out some of the details for campaigning. At this stage, we desperately need more candidates for the board and regional coordinator roles.

5. Continue current COVID-19 responses including website resources, planning more webinars and twitter chats, and SPJ Day of Giving Back.

Since COVID, we have held some webinars. Below is a list including the attendance rate for each:

- COVID-19 Crisis: Economic Relief for Freelance Journalists - 39
- Censorship: Getting Past Reporting Roadblocks in the Time of COVID-19 - 44
- Journalism on Film: The Good, The Bad and the Obscure – 38
- A Semester Sendoff from Jorge Ramos: Journalism Needs You Now More Than Ever – 155
- Stories from the Frontlines: Journalists and Protests with CNN's Brian Stelter -- 137

In addition to these, the International Community started a series of webinars, and many of our local chapters have held some excellent sessions, namely SPJ New England.

We devoted our Day of Giving to building an emergency fund for journalists. We had our most successful Day of Giving ever, raising over \$40,000 and giving grants to over 140 journalists in need.

6. Request money from the SPJ Foundation to build capacity to strengthen online training and education.

We approached the foundation with a proposal to fund a staff position and related expenses for an education program and received an initial grant of almost \$200,000.

7. Provide extra chapter support in terms of operational needs.

One item of note is that we purchased a Zoom subscription for chapter use, and it has been used fairly extensively for meetings and events. We've also tried to link chapters together that were pursuing similar ideas so that they could learn from each other. More can be done here.

8. Empower staff and a small task force to create a plan for Google and Facebook trainings and to ensure contracts exist for 2021.

We did not follow through with a task force, but staff (Lou and Lynn) have effectively communicated with Google and Facebook and I feel good about our collaborations now and into the future.

9. Actively recruit 2 new association management clients.

Jake is currently in negotiation with two new potential clients, both smaller journalism organizations.

10. Task ED to lead an effort to bring a thorough 3-5 year strategic plan for SPJ to the board in June 2020.

This will be presented as part of the board meeting, and then we will proceed accordingly.

Here is what is on the horizon before we convene again in September:

- The planning and execution of a fall conference.
- Elections for the 2020-21 board.
- The selection and onboarding for a new Director of Education.
- Q2 financial reports.
- Building a list of potential sites for our 2022 convention.

I appreciate the chance to lead a committed staff team as we keep SPJ moving ever forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Shertzer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Shertzer

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 27, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: John Shertzler, Executive Director and Jake Koenig, Controller

Re: Financial Report for June 2020 Board Meeting



This memo is to provide a glimpse into SPJ's financial position in advance of reporting for the second quarter, which ends June 30. We plan to have the reports available within 6 weeks of the close of the quarter so that we can ensure all charges have hit our books. We did not assemble Q1 statements, because our new 2020 budget was approved in mid-April (past the close of the first quarter).

For reference, this will be the schedule for quarterly reports in a typical year:

March 31: Q1 closes

By May 15: Q1 reports delivered to finance committee and discussed in meeting, with a report submitted for June board meeting.

June 30: Q2 closes

By July 15: Q2 reports delivered to finance committee and discussed in meeting, with a report submitted for September board meeting.

September 30: Q3 closes

By October 15: Q3 reports delivered to finance committee and discussed in meeting, with a report submitted for late Fall board meeting. **At this board meeting the next year budget would also be approved.**

December 31: Q4 closes

By February 15: Q4 reports delivered to finance committee and discussed in meeting, with a report submitted for next board meeting.

So that you have a general sense of our financial condition, we have assembled some basic numbers from Q1 (January-March) for you to review:

- SPJ was cash positive during Q1 primarily due to awards revenue hitting in those months. Cash increased by \$54,000.
- In terms of revenue during this quarter:
 - Awards revenue was \$10k or 6% below budget
 - Membership Revenue averaged \$31k per month and was \$15k or 20% over budget.
 - Most other revenue streams were at or close to budget.
- In terms of expenses during this quarter:
 - Expenses overall were \$52k or 16% below budget based on a straight-line estimates of budgeted expenses divided quarterly. Some of this could be timing differences only.
 - Salaries and benefits were 23% over budget. Part of this could be attributed to a higher number of accounting hours required of Jake, including budgeting. Based on a more regular work schedule in Q2, that variance should be coming down.

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 25, 2020
To: SPJ Board of Directors
From: Matthew Kent, SPJ Program Coordinator
Re: SPJ Elections candidates



These are the following candidates who have declared their intent to seek the following seats as of June 25, 2020:

At-large director

Haisten Willis
Andrew Seaman

President-elect

Sue Kopen Katcef

Secretary-treasurer

None filed

Region 1 coordinator

Jane Primerano

Region 4 coordinator

Ginny McCabe

Region 5 coordinator

Amy Merrick

Region 7 coordinator

None filed

Region 8 coordinator

Kathryn Jones

Region 9 coordinator

None filed

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 15, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: Sue Kopen Katcef, Chair, Awards & Honors Committee

Re: Status report

This has been an extremely busy time for the Awards & Honors Committee.

As you know, soon after much of the country shutdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic, awards committee member Michael Koretzky created a first for the committee and SPJ: a “pop up” free weekly contest honoring the incredible work still being done by student journalists around the country.

We moved very quickly to make that happen and the College Coronavirus Coverage Contest was launched.

We teamed up with four other groups to help with judging: the Associated Collegiate Press, the Society for News Design, College Broadcasters, Inc. and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

The contest had three divisions:

General Content (judged by SPJ & ACP)

Weekly winners received a free one-year SPJ membership

CCC Design Award (judged by SND)

Weekly winners received a free SND membership

CCC Free Press Award (judged by SPJ & FIRE)

Winners received \$100 and a free one-year SPJ membership

There was one grand final selection drawn from among all of the winners from the previous weeks.

Here are the results by the numbers:

1574 different pieces of content submitted

995 total entries

238 number of participating student media outlets ranging from the Ivy League to community colleges

20 Professional outlets where interns submitted work which included the Washington Post, the New York Times and USA Today

140 average number of entries per week

20,681 unique visitors to the CCC website

47,936 number of clicks on the CCC website

Reps from all of the organizations shared in the weekly judging duties.

Special note should be made of the fact that Awards & Honors Committee Vice Chair Andy Schotz was the only person to serve as a judge every week of the contest. Given the volume of material submitted that truly is an impressive accomplishment.

SPJ is now maintaining the website. Our membership staff is expected to use the database of participating colleges and universities—along with the students—to promote becoming an SPJ member and encouraging the CCC participants to enter SPJ's Mark of Excellence Contest.

A special digital badge was created for all of the weekly winners to promote their CCC honor online.

The CCC was an unequivocal success in every sense of the word. And the fact that it was up and running in just a matter of days is nothing short of extraordinary. It was executed exceedingly well and certainly raised SPJ's profile among a key group: college students. Hopefully, we will add to our membership rolls as a result of this incredible effort.

If you didn't keep up with the weekly blog updates with links to the winning work and honorable mentions I would encourage you to do so. The work is impressive. The link is <https://blogs.spjnetwork.org/ccc/>

Other contests

Some more contest facts and figures:

The **Mark of Excellence Contest** had 2100 total entries. Three schools accounted for 15% of the total MOE revenue this year:

Arizona State University with 180 entries

Northwestern with 82 entries

Syracuse with 63 entries

Twenty schools submitted just one entry.

The **Sigma Delta Chi** contest had a total of 1185 entries this year.

38% came from broadcast outlets.

In fact, the entries from ABC, CBS and NBC accounted for 12% of ALL SDX entries this year.

An analysis of this year's entries indicated a lack of participation from news operations with members on the SPJ board. However, the SPJ Foundation was well represented in the contest with submissions from news outlets who have staff members on the Foundation board.

As you know, the SDX Awards presentation will be going "virtual" this year. This was to be the first year the national MOEy (MOE Best of Show) winner was to receive their award at the SDX awards dinner. We will ask that the MOEy winner and the New America winner are both honored during the SDX Awards online event.

The Awards & Honors Committee will be holding a Zoom meeting before mid-July to review current categories and consider new ones. We will finalize the SDX & MOE COVID-19 reporting categories and plan on an additional (for now) one-time category in specialized reporting to reflect the content currently being produced on racial disparities in the wake of the death of George Floyd.

We are also hoping to come up with a proposal to encourage greater participation in the SDX & MOE contests.

Finally, with the new governance structure the Awards & Honors Committee had the task of vetting and recommending nominations for this year's Fellows (as you know), SPJ's Historic Sites and the Dubin Awards for Outstanding Pro Members.

And coming up this summer, there will be an interactive timeline on spj.org featuring all of SPJ's Fellows.

Our recommendations for this year's Historic Site and Dubin Outstanding Pro Members will come under separate cover.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "She".

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 19, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: Rebecca Aguilar, Diversity Committee Chair

Re: SPJ Diversity Committee Report

Currently, the Diversity Committee is in the process of compiling guidelines that will help newsrooms keep the conversation going about diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias.

Today, many journalists of color feel they finally have news management's attention when covering communities of color and having an equal voice in the newsroom. The death of George Floyd has also been a turning point for journalism. We hope to have the guidelines compiled soon, and then we will figure out where we can have them published.

We are also in the process of discussing what to do with the 2020 Diversity Fellowship. We had to wait for the board to decide if we are having a conference or not. I will keep you posted.

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 24, 2020
To: SPJ Board of Directors
From: Lynn Walsh, Ethics Committee Chair
Re: SPJ Ethics Committee Report



(The April report stands as is)

About: This committee's purpose is to encourage the use of the Society's Code of Ethics, which promotes the highest professional standards for journalists of all disciplines. Public concerns are often answered by this committee. It also acts as a spotter for reporting trends in the nation, accumulating case studies of jobs well done under trying circumstances.

Who: Eleven journalists based in cities throughout the country sit on the committee. The committee is chaired by Lynn Walsh the Assistance Director of the Trusting News project and a freelance journalist. The other committee members are: Lauren Bartlett, Fred Brown, David Cohn, Annie Culver, Elizabeth Donald, Mike Farrell, Paul Fletcher, Michael Lear-Olimpi, Chris Roberts, Alex Veeneman.

What: The SPJ Ethics Committee is working toward its mission by participating and leading the following programs:

- **SPJ Ethics Hotline:** Responding to ethics inquiries received through the ethics hotline is one of the most rewarding and interesting projects I have had the pleasure of leading. Since October 4, 2018, SPJ has received 196 inquiries from working journalists, the public and students. I said this in my last report, but I'm going to repeat it this time as well: I think this service is one of the most under-advertised tools that SPJ offers. The people who call in are extremely grateful for the support and advice. I really feel this hotline hits at what SPJ's core values are and would like to see it more widely shared. I think this hotline is something SPJ should be proud of and it would be great to see if there is a way to get it funded to support the time and effort the volunteers commit to it.
- **SPJ Ethics Week:** The committee worked with Jennifer Royer to make Ethics Week a possibility again this year. Due to timing of several other events SPJ was working on and COVID-19 we have decided to move Ethics week to the fall, sometime in October most likely.
- **Public Training Program:** We have created a 45-minute presentation that can be presented to non-journalists that uses the SPJ Code of Ethics to explain how journalism works and what journalists do to the public. Now that the presentation is finalized, the committee will help SPJ market the presentation. The idea is that members of the public would request this training and SPJ members would lead the presentations. With

COVID-19, I do not think the timing to launch something like this makes sense since the idea is to do the trainings in person. Instead, the committee is working with SPJ to see how it can help talk about ethics and COVID-19 coverage. So far, we have led one Twitter chat and published a blog related to the pandemic coverage but are open and talking about doing more.

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 16, 2020
To: SPJ Board of Directors
From: Paul Fletcher, FOI Committee Chair
Re: SPJ FOI Committee Report



This report will provide an account of the activities of the SPJ Freedom of Information committee since my report in April.

Webinar. On May 5, Kathryn Foxhall, Frank LoMonte and I appeared on an SPJ webinar entitled, “Censorship: Getting Past Reporting Roadblocks in the Time of COVID-19.” The URL is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAvDQliooK8&t=358s>

Sunshine Awards. The committee made four recommendations for Sunshine Awards:

Center for Public Integrity/USA Today /Arizona Republic
R. Jeffrey Smith and the Center for Public Integrity
Jeremy Gerner and Gregory Pratt
Christina Jewett

Local Advocacy Toolbox. I am attaching a copy of our local advocacy review document.

We are still trying to determine the best way to utilize this information. One option we are pursuing is to marry the local advocacy toolbox with efforts to educate SPJ members on how to lobby.

That proposal may involve seeking a grant from the First Amendment Forever fund.

Case Studies. Kathryn was able to repurpose one of Carolyn Carlson’s PIO studies (Police Reporters, 2016) into a timely email to members of Congress. We continue to search for an academic to pick up Carolyn’s baton and to continue study of PIOs and the problems they raise.

FOI Committee Advocacy Report

LOCAL ADVOCACY REVIEW
SPJ Pro Chapters 2019



REGION 1

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Three

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Keystone Pro was among the sponsors of a Sunshine Week event sponsored by The Caucus March 12 in Harrisburg, looking back at the 10-year history of the Right to Know Law as well as into the future. Speakers included legislators, attorneys, and veteran journalists.

Press Club of Long Island hosted a Freedom of Information Forum at Hofstra University.

The Deadline Club presents an annual event titled "Extract the Facts: FOIA Strategies, Tips and Media Action." The club also joined a consortium of NYC media organizations spearheading an effort to increase FOI responses and reduce FOI response time.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: Seven

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

New England Pro released a statement to support a trade publication that was being banned from New England Power Pool Participants Committee meetings.

Press Club of Long Island (PCLI) released statements on the Capital Gazette shooting, expulsion of two journalists from political rally, the Boston Globe's #Enough campaign, a statement denounced tariffs on newsprint, and a statement opposing newsroom cuts by media conglomerate Altice.

Other noteworthy activities:

SPJ Connecticut board member (and FOIA committee member) Michael Savino is president of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information, "the top lobbying organization for FOI and open government in Connecticut."

Keystone Pro reported circulating copies of the SPJ Code of Ethics.

PCLI held a fundraiser with proceeds benefiting the Committee to Protect Journalists.

REGION 2

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? No

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: Unclear

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Maryland Pro reported issuing “several” statements via social media regarding ongoing open government and press freedom issues in the local area. Chapter president Anna Walsh also met with leaders of other press organizations to discuss concerns about public understanding and treatment of journalists.

Other noteworthy activities:

Kathryn Foxhall and Jonathan Make spoke to students about dealing with PIOs. Make regularly writes about FOIA issues via Medium.com, cross promotes FOIA events held by other groups and [has written](#) about collaborative efforts to better tell journalists’ stories.

REGION 3

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Three

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

SPJ Florida

- hosted a webinar in support of freelance journalist Cody Weddle, who was detained while working for WPLG in Miami.
- hosted its “Fake News Game Show” and “F**K Words with Friends” several times, helping explain how journalism works to the public.
- co-hosted five “Sunshine Seminars” with the First Amendment Foundation.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: Four

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

All three Region 3 pro chapters joined the Boston Globe’s August 2018 #Enough campaign. The chapters’ joint statement was mentioned in the New York Times.

SPJ Georgia released a statement denouncing Georgia House Bill 734, which was picked up by local and regional outlets and by The Guardian newspaper in England.

SPJ Florida

- released a statement defending a reporter who was verbally attacked and insulted by a Broward School District PIO.
- released a statement denouncing State Sen. Daphne Campbell for calling the police on two journalists. The senator later lost a re-election bid.

REGION 4

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Five

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Central Ohio Pro

- Participation in a First Amendment forum with a discussion of fake news and disinformation
- FOI discussion as part of Google Elections Coverage workshop
- FOI discussion, including FOIA requests, protecting notes and navigating the government bureaucracy to get public records, as part of Freelancers Workshop.

Cincinnati Pro

The National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) and the Ohio Coalition of Open Government (OCOG) presented the 2018 FOI Summit in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Sept. 21 and 22 at the Westin Cincinnati. Cincinnati SPJ was a sponsor of the event. The 29th annual summit is a gathering of state FOI coalition directors, journalists, attorneys, and open government and first amendment advocates focused on issues and trends around state and local open government legislation, policies and practices. An excellent networking experience, the summit included panel discussions, presentations, and group interaction among FOI and First Amendment experts, advocates and champions. The summit also included the State Open Government Hall of Fame luncheon.

Cleveland Pro

Hosted Regional Conference, with an hour-long session about First Amendment Rights for students, sharing advice on how to request public records and to pressure administrators to comply with FOIA laws and regulations.

SPJ Detroit Pro

- became a key partner organization in a united effort involving newsrooms and media outlets across Michigan to push for reform of the state's Freedom of Information Act. The coalition, which will officially launch later this year, will use a multi-pronged approach to spotlight how FOIA is endangered in Michigan. The target audience includes lawmakers and the public.

- remains active in the Michigan Coalition for Open Government, another statewide advocacy group pushing for FOIA reform. Kat Stafford, vice-president/FOIA, recently took on the role as SPJ Detroit's permanent founding board position within MICOG.

Mid-Michigan Pro

Supported the Michigan Coalition of Open Government; chapter's treasurer, Judy Putnam, is SPJ chapter's representative on the MiCOG board.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: one

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Mid-Michigan Pro

Board members Judy Putnam and Kathy Barks Hoffman also worked to place op-eds in The Detroit News, Lansing (Mich.) State Journal and other newspapers during Sunshine Week.

REGION 5

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Three

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Bluegrass Pro

Program with Jon Fleischaker, a Louisville attorney and the primary author of Kentucky's 1975 Open Records/Open Meetings laws to give area journalists an update on those laws and offer advice for understanding and enforcing them.

Chicago Headline Club

FOIAFest, seventh annual program in February 2019 with 140 attendees. A day-long program to train, inform and inform journalists and anyone interested in FOI laws.

Louisville Pro

An open records panel with four investigative journalists and two media lawyers — one of whom wrote Kentucky's open records law — they provided their top tips for using open records and overcoming barriers.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: Three

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Bluegrass Pro

Supported UK student newspaper in a fight with the school administration over access to records of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Strongly worded statement in support of Transylvania U newspaper after administration withdrew financial support in apparent attempt to exert editorial control.

Chicago Headline Club

Issued a number of statements, including a demand that Jim Acosta's White House credentials be reinstated.

Indiana Pro

Monitored legislation and court rulings. Issued statement on three bills advancing in Indiana General Assembly that threatened press freedoms.

Other noteworthy activities:

Chicago Headline Club is part of a transparency committee, coordinated by Better Government Association and Citizen Advocacy Center, that reviews legislation impacting FOI and open meetings.

REGION 6

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: one, Minnesota Pro

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Minnesota Pro's signature effort this year revolved around defending First Amendment rights in a number of instances from defending confidential sources to calling on political leaders to cease blocking journalists from their public Twitter feeds. Chapter had many events this year that drew media and public attention.

One event in partnership with other First Amendment advocates drew major television station and newspaper coverage.

Chapter participated in the local Committee to Defend the First Amendment, a group calling for an end to the city's investigation of a confidential source who leaked a report to the Star Tribune on use of a dangerous drug by emergency medical providers without the knowledge of patients.

The Committee to Defend the First Amendment delivered a petition to Mayor Jacob Frey's office. The investigation ultimately ended without penalty to journalists or revealing the confidential source.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: one, Minnesota Pro

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

In addition to work with Committee to Defend the First Amendment, Minnesota Pro issued a number of statements. It also joined in the filing of an amicus brief in a court case.

- Statement: MNSPJ calls on St. Louis County to release emails in accordance with law.
- Statement: MNSPJ calls on elected officials to stop blocking public and journalists from social media. Also filed a request for an advisory opinion from the state Data Practices Office.
- Statement: MNSPJ opposes Hennepin County Court's severe restrictions on coverage of police shooting trial coverage. Also signed with other media organizations onto a joint petition to the court to remove the restrictions.

Chapter also filed an amicus brief in a case with other First Amendment groups to appeal a ruling by a judge that kept secret the state's bid to win an Amazon headquarters. The bid was later released voluntarily.

The Minnesota Pro chapter continued to lead the way in an important, difficult case – urging for the public release of documents in the investigation of the disappearance of Jacob Wetterling. Several media groups, including MPR News, the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MNCOGI) and MNSPJ, sought the release of documents from the case, according to state law.

SPJ national has strongly supported that work, securing \$10,000 from the SPJ legal defense fund. While the chapter signed on to the case in 2017, the legal fund money was secured in 2018 and the Wetterling documents were released in September 2018.

Other noteworthy activities:

Madison Pro is a member of the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council and supports its initiatives.

Madison Pro chapter routinely partners for programs with the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Journalism Ethics.

Minnesota Pro chapter partnered with the University of Minnesota Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication on an ethics program during SPJ Ethics Week April 29.

REGION 7

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Two

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Kansas City Press Club

The KC Press Club had a Legislative Agenda program that was canceled due to a snowstorm; efforts to reschedule were unsuccessful.

St. Louis Pro

The signature program for St. Louis Pro is a boot camp, "J-School in a Day," bringing in professionals to speak with students pursuing journalism, including a mock press conference and competition for the best story written on deadline during the event. FOIA is an integral part of the boot camp, which is held at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

St. Louis Pro cosponsored the annual First Amendment Free* Food Festival at SIUE, in which students can sign away their First Amendment rights for free pizza. Event is coordinated by the student newspaper and the school's Mass Communications Department.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? yes

If so, how many: One

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Kansas Pro wrote two letters to the editor to the Wichita Eagle, one defending Wichita State University's student newspaper and another supporting the newspaper's academic advisor.

Other noteworthy activities:

St. Louis Pro continued its partnerships with other journalism groups in the greater St. Louis area: the Online News Association (St. Louis chapter), St. Louis Press Club, TechWrite STL, Midwest Freelancers (which consolidated with the Editorial Freelancers Association), and the Greater St. Louis Association of Black Journalists.

Kansas Pro helps with Communication Week at Wichita State.

SW Missouri Pro has five members and has discussed seeking to become a satellite of KC.

REGION 8

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Two

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

San Antonio Pro sponsored a fundraiser for the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas on March 29, 2019. The program featured a Trivia Bowl contest in Jeopardy-style "answer and question" format.

Fort Worth Pro held a program/mixer, "Fighting for Press Freedom in Schools," in support of a professor at Tarleton State University after he was admonished by university administrators for not disclosing the names of people who spoke to a student reporter on the condition of anonymity.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: Two

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Fort Worth Pro held a program/mixer, "Fighting for Press Freedom in Schools," in support of a professor at Tarleton State University after he was admonished by university administrators for not disclosing the names of people who spoke to a student reporter on the condition of anonymity.

Oklahoma Pro partnered with FOI Oklahoma to send letters of protest to tribal officials at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in response to censorship attempts against the tribe's then-independent media outlets.

Other noteworthy activities:

San Antonio Pro partnered with numerous other journalism groups and SPJ student chapters for its programs throughout the year:

- GRIDIRON SHOW -- the San Antonio Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Public Relations Society of America San Antonio chapter and the local Association for Women in Communications chapter.
- DIVERSITY PROGRAM -- the student SPJ chapter at Texas State University.
- ETHICS PROGRAM – the student SPJ Chapter at San Antonio College.
- EXILED JOURNALIST PROGRAM – the San Antonio Association of Black Journalists.

REGION 9

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: three

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Rio Grande Pro hosted the Region 9 Conference, UNM Continuing Education Center, April 5-6, which drew 163 journalists from New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and West Texas. FOI was key to several discussions at the Region 9 Conference, including in a session dedicated to Open Government/Open Data. In June and August, through funding from the Thornburg

Foundation, chapter offered a series of in-person and online “follow-the-money” trainings on campaign finance reform and using data in covering the mid-term elections.

Colorado Pro

- co-hosted a Sunshine Week event with Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition and Colorado Press Association, a well-attended event to which the public was invited.
- held a January panel on journalism issues before the Colorado General Assembly, and donated \$1,500 to the Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition.

Utah Headliners hosted a “Media Day on The Hill” on March 11, where chapter covered expenses for a dozen local media outlets to table at the Utah State Capitol Rotunda during the 2019 Legislature. This event gave local outlets the chance to meet and mingle with lawmakers, Capitol staff and visitors.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: three, all Utah

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

In February, the Utah Headliners board rallied support for students at Dixie State University in southern Utah, who had recently been shut out of student government and faculty senate meetings. The campus administration had claimed that these meetings—where publicly paid faculty discussed the use of public resources—could be closed to student journalists. The board supported the efforts of the local attorneys of Parr, Brown Gee, & Loveless in fighting for the meetings to be opened. Thanks to chapter efforts, the campus shortly thereafter decided to reopen the meetings to the student journalists and the public.

The Chapter has also been actively involved in fighting alongside student journalists at Utah Valley University who have had an ongoing dispute with the campus’s chief of police. In 2018, the campus police department stopped providing small police blotter items to reporters of *The UVU Review* for free. Instead, they began charging the paper \$10 per blotter—a one-paragraph summary of each crime incident on campus—costing the paper between \$60-\$80 for a week’s worth of crime incident blotters.

Board President Peterson and Vice President George Severson met with campus officials and explained how unreasonable the fees were; campus officials met with the chief, who in a compromise decided to charge only \$5 for the blotters, which was still considered unreasonable.

In a first for the state and the chapter board, the Utah Headliners has now joined the editor of *The UVU Review* in filing an official appeal of unreasonable fees to the Utah State Records Committee. In June, chapter was set to appear before the committee to argue the unreasonable fee is being levied in violation of state records laws.

REGION 10

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: Two

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Inland NW Pro Chapter visited Gonzaga University and a high school.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? No

REGION 11

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: 30

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Las Vegas Pro

- did fundraising and awarded 20 journalism scholarships.
- present programs on: covering and protecting your elections; dealing with trolls; and fixing Nevada's Public Record Act.
- chapter secretary, Michael Davidson, did newsroom and campus visits.

Los Angeles Pro

- organized an Online Harassment Self-Defense Workshop.
- organized a session on pay disparities in newsrooms.
- organized the first-ever Los Angeles Leadership Dinner on April 10, 2019, with assistance from the Los Angeles chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists. Presidents and vice presidents of 11 L.A.-based journalism organizations attended, including National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Los Angeles, Online News Association L.A., California Chicano News Media Association, Asian American Journalists Association, Native American Journalists Association and Radio TV News Association. Attendees agreed to communicate and collaborate more often and meet quarterly.
- hosted a Jan. 22, 2019, panel discussion on "Reporters and PIOs at a Crossroads of Information," inspired by studies by SPJ National showing reporters find it increasingly difficult to access information and conduct interviews through public information officers.

San Diego SPJ

- produced its third annual Better Journalism Workshop series, geared toward mid-career journalists eager to improve their skills. Jason Leopold, senior investigative reporter at BuzzFeed News, spoke about his legendary skills at prying loose federal records.
- sponsored a panel on investigative reporting with The Washington Post's Amy Brittain and Reveal's Amy Julia Harris.
- had a panel on trauma reporting.
- continued to host workshops on how the public can discern real from fake news online. In cities across San Diego County, board members organized or sat on panels centered around giving the public ways and reminders to evaluate the reliability of content.
- had its annual Grade the Media event, where panelists central to the year's top stories discuss what the media got right or wrong. This event gives the public a peek behind the curtain on how some most-read headlines and stories were formed, including mistakes made along the way. Panelists give San Diego journalists a grade based on their work, allowing the public an avenue to voice opinions on press performance.
- board members regularly visit high school and college classes.
- held a public event at a library where journalists talked about fake news, ethical issues they weigh on a regular basis and why the media covers what it does.
- teamed with the San Diego County Bar Association on a similar event to educate lawyers and judges about journalism ethics.
- discussed ethical issues covered when covering traumatic events in an event at the city's central library
- partnered with the local chapters of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists on a discussion about beat reporting. The local chapters were the NAHJ San Diego/Tijuana chapter and the San Diego State University student chapter.
- also partnered with NAHJ, the San Diego Association of Black Journalists, the Asian American Journalists Association San Diego chapter, the San Diego Press Club, the Online News Association and the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences on an annual media groups party to foster collaboration.
- teamed again with these groups for an event about journalists being tracked by immigration officials.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: Six

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Las Vegas Pro

- did outreach to the public on public records advocacy.
- is a leading member of the Right to Know Nevada coalition advocating for an update for state public records law.

- testified at hearings of the Nevada Legislature, engaged in capacity building with other journalists with regard to citizen lobbying, and published opinion pieces across the state to further goal of a public records law that actually works for all Nevadans.

Los Angeles Pro

- sent two letters of protest regarding Assembly proposed bill (AB 700) to exempt a vast swath of university research materials from the state's public-record disclosure law. The bill was pulled after protests from SPJ/LA and others.
- joined an amicus brief, along with a motion for judicial notice and exhibits, filed by the Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press on behalf of the Palisades News and two editors, who have been sued by cannabis entrepreneur Stephanie Smith for alleged defamation.
- hounded UCLA to fulfill the chapter's California Public Records Act request from March 7, 2018. SPJLA publicly complained about UCLA's sluggish response with a statement on the chapter's website, an email to 1,500 people on the email list and a letter to the UC Board of Regent. The request was finally fulfilled in May 2019.

San Diego Pro

- has defended the right of journalists to not answer subpoenas from San Diego County's Counsel for notes and interviews done for a story.
- opposed a San Diego Unified School District plan to allow the district to delete emails after one year. SD-SPJ released public statements after finding that most state school districts have a two-year email retention policy. The policy was challenged in court and SD-SPJ submitted a letter on concerns that the plan would weaken the California Public Records Act. The judge agreed and ordered the school district to not implement the policy.

REGION 12

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? Yes

If so, how many: 20

Please list names and topics of each, and briefly describe:

Arkansas SPJ

- signature effort was Reporting in the Midst of Tragedy, a panel discussion about covering the news during the toughest of times, which took place Aug. 9 after the shooting deaths of five staff members at the Capital Gazette.
- hosted three events intended to engage journalists and non-journalists alike: Immigration and the Media; Police, Press and the Public; and FOIA Training + Q&A.
- traveled more than 750 miles in just over a month to bring "Get the Scoop ... and Check the Facts," a traveling ice cream social, to about 110 student journalists and professionals. Speakers

shared stories about how they got big scoops, ideas about how to cultivate sources on a beat and the importance of checking the facts.

- went on a FOIA blitz for Sunshine Week hosting three events. The chapter coordinated with the state attorney general's office to offer FOIA Training on March 12, followed by a Q&A session with several local journalists who shared tips and stories about how they use FOIA to access public records every day.
- Sunshine Trivia invited FOIA fans to grab a brew and pizza while testing their knowledge of the state's FOIA history and regulations with a fun twist and prizes.
- presented "Police, Press and the Public, featuring three members of local police departments, including Officer Tommy Norman, who promotes community policing through his Mission Give Foundation and far-reaching social media presence, and two journalists on public information, transparency, crime, community policing and how media and police work with each other.
- suggested a \$5 donation at events to assist with chapter's \$1,000 donation for printing the 19th Edition of the Arkansas Freedom of Information Handbook.
- hosted "Immigration and the Media" at Southwest Little Rock Community Center. It included a documentary on how Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has affected some college students by Bilal Sohail, a graduate film student at the University of Central Arkansas. The film was followed by a public discussion moderated by Michel Leidermann, director of El Latino newspaper, on local media coverage of the issues and people affected by immigration and DACA and things to consider to improve reporting on these subjects.
- held a region-wide celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Tinker v. Des Moines Supreme Court decision, which defined the rights of student journalists. With a regional grant, Arkansas SPJ provided 1,000 scholastic and collegiate journalists, educators and SPJ members with armbands to be worn Feb. 22 in honor of the Tinker decision.
- held a free training session by Lynn Walsh on how to connect with audiences, find content and build communities using Facebook.

East Tennessee Pro

- signature effort was the annual legislative luncheon to give journalists and the public a preview of the bills Tennessee lawmakers plan for the next legislative session.
- helped sponsor the University of Tennessee's 27th Annual Hill Lecture. Three-time Emmy Award-winning science documentary filmmaker Sarah Holt spoke on "Turning Complex Science Stories Into Compelling Television."
- worked closely with the two SPJ student chapters in the area. Chapter invited students from University of Tennessee Chattanooga's student chapter for networking and pizza. Additionally, East Tennessee Pro worked with University of Tennessee's chapter, participating this year in Social Media Week, a series of programs on journalism and social media.
- held a "Newsroom" (TV show) watch party and discussion. Group picked an episode focused on ethics. Members of the community and journalists attended.
- worked with the University of Tennessee to bring Alison Bethel McKenzie, SPJ executive director to speak at the university's ninth annual Diversity and Inclusion Week.

Northwest Arkansas Pro

- had three members among the University of Arkansas faculty volunteers for the Lemke Journalism Project from February to April, which brings primarily Latinx high school students to the University of Arkansas on Saturdays to teach them journalism skills. About 50 students from Northwest Arkansas participated. During this program, one chapter member/faculty volunteer talked on press freedom to the students on the anniversary of the Tinker vs. Des Moines decision.
- members gave eight lectures on ethics, based on the SPJ Code of Ethics, to some 280 journalism students at the University of Arkansas. The Code was also the basis of discussions in one member's Journalism Theory class.
- hosted a #MeToo event on the University of Arkansas campus. A panel of four female journalists spoke to some sixty college students about sexual harassment in the workplace and related issues.

Middle Tennessee

- has several chapter members active with student journalists. Classroom visits and conference talks (such as at this year's Southeast Journalism Conference) are not always branded under the chapter banner, but this outreach is occurring.
- hosted a training on Jan. 10 about the Fair Report Privilege, led by a local attorney with deep prior experience in Florida and Michigan before his relocation to Tennessee.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? Yes

If so, how many: 10

Please list topics of each, and briefly describe:

Arkansas Pro

- Five members of the chapter board of directors served on the state's FOIA Coalition. Board member Rob Moritz continues to serve on the state FOIA Commission, which was created to help review and make recommendations on proposed FOIA-related amendments and legislation.
- Additionally, one member in particular worked with state representatives to pass two New Voices bills. HB1231 added protections for college journalists and advisers and HB 1432 expanded protections on the high-school level.
- released a statement in solidarity with The Herald of Har-Ber High School in Springdale after it was silenced by its administration for publishing a story about the transfer of football players to a rival high school.
- wrote to the Arkansas Legislative Council expressing concern about the state Department of Education's proposed revision of public school accrediting standards to no longer require a high school journalism elective offering.

East Tennessee Pro

- worked with the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government to support new anti-SLAPP legislation.

Northwest Arkansas Pro

- chapter secretary, under the auspices of SPJ, testified at a state House Education Committee hearing in support of HB 1015 to make journalism a requirement in Arkansas high schools. The chapter undertook a letter writing campaign to support the bill, which was defeated.
- One chapter member was interviewed by the Arkansas Democrat Gazette on open access (or lack thereof) by the mayor of Little Rock, who blocked the press from contacting city government employees directly, requiring them to work through a public relations agency. This same member included FOI issues in a Data Journalism class he taught at the University of Arkansas.

Middle Tennessee

- sent a letter to Tennessee House Speaker Glen Casada regarding access at the state capitol. Casada, embattled, has since resigned under heavy media pressure.
- supported a successful effort to create a more robust anti-SLAPP law in Tennessee.
- is also a dues-paying supporter of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government, which has a full-time director who is highly active during the legislative session.

REGION 0

Did chapters in this region organize advocacy-focused projects or programs? None -- only one chapter listed, Micronesia Chapter, and it reported it is reconstituting after years of dormancy.

Did chapters in this region report issuing journalism advocacy statements? No

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 27, 2020
To: SPJ Board of Directors
From: Leticia Steffens, J-Education Committee Chair
Re: SPJ Journalism Education Committee Report

#Press4Education: This continues to be the J-Education committee's main focus. Because of changes to her job duties, Rebecca Baker had to relinquish her responsibilities in overseeing this initiative and participating in J-Education. We brought Becky Tallent out of retirement to oversee (and she was glad to do so). Becky, Kym Fox and Leticia Steffen are now handling inquiries from instructors as they come in.

We've made 57 matches since September, with 55 in-person presentations. In light of new demands being placed on educators to provide remote/online instruction modules to students during this pandemic crisis, we have begun converting some of the more popular #Press4Education modules (fake news, basic reporting, media law, media ethics, broadcasting, editing) to videos for educators to access. We received an overwhelming response from journalists and J-Education committee members who have already done #Press4Education presentations and who are willing to convert presentations to videos.

Because of the huge response, we have also asked some folks to help put together videos addressing some current issues related to the importance of journalism in this pandemic crisis, how journalists continue to work and serve their communities, etc. From Becky: "With the videos coming in today (Friday, April 3), we should have them branded and ready for use by teachers next week. When they are ready, I will let JEA and all the teachers waiting for speakers know. I think we will keep the same system of them making the request, then we get the video to them, that way we can keep track." Becky also notes that we're making rapid changes to #Press4Education in light of the pandemic, and we hope to be able to use these videos not only this year, but also in the future when we run into places where we simply cannot get a volunteer to the location. Again, from Becky: "We moved pretty quickly to get this completed to be of use this school year."

Results so far:
In-person: presentation 55
Video presentations: 667
Grand total: 722

As the numbers indicate, the video presentations have been a great success!

Minority Serving Institutions: We continue tweaking the list of U.S. minority serving institutions, removing colleges/universities from the list that have either closed down or do not have journalism/writing programs. J-Ed committee members are reviewing the list of institutions in their regions. Once this review is complete, we will begin determining which colleges/universities we want to reach out to, and sharing the benefits SPJ could provide to support their journalism endeavors. A one-page flyer summarizing these benefits was also developed to share with these colleges/universities once we are ready to begin contacting them.

We have had some changes to the J-Ed Committee membership (job changes, retirements, etc.). Leticia shared the new roster with Billy, and he updated the information on the SPJ website.

J-Ed Committee member Tracy Henion has volunteered to resurrect our Facebook page (she created this in 2015 then left the committee but recently rejoined).

We've had two meetings since EIJ: Friday, Nov. 8, 2019 and Friday, March 6, 2020.

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 27, 2020
To: SPJ Board of Directors
From: Hagit Limor, LDF Committee Chair
Re: SPJ Legal Defense Fund Committee Report

The LDF committee has taken action on 36 cases since our last report for the annual convention in September. Below are short synopses taken from our attorneys' descriptions of each case. As always, more cases are likely to come in between this reporting deadline and the full board meeting, but we will report those in the next annual report. Thanks to our Baker Hostetler attorneys Mark Bailen and Kristen Rasmussen for their initial summaries.

9/1/19 RCFP Amicus - PETA, et al. v. Cooper, et al. (M.D. N.C.)

Federal court case in North Carolina challenging the constitutionality of an N.C. law that is like an "ag-gag" law but targets all of businesses, not just agricultural facilities. It creates a civil cause of action against employees who record images or sound within a company's premises. Such statutes chill reporter-source communications and interfere with investigative journalism.

9/5 RCFP Amicus Brief in Digital First Media d/b/a The Trentonian v. Ewing Township, et al. (NJ OPRA)

New Jersey Open Records Act case currently on appeal. The issue is access to police department "Use of Force Reports" ("UFRs") involving juvenile suspects. The *Trentonian* is seeking these records and has asked that the juveniles' names be redacted so disclosure does not reveal juvenile identifying information. The trial court upheld the Township's outright denial of the records. The amicus brief canvasses practices in other states that allow for redaction and production of this information, including in Ohio where WCPO-TV did an extensive investigation based on UFRs. WCPO found that black juveniles were subject to excessive use of force more often than white juveniles. The brief argues in favor of using less restrictive means, such as redactions, to allow for disclosure of as much public information as possible while also protecting other interests (such as juvenile identity information).

9/6 Smith v. Van Meter

We awarded West Virginia freelance journalist Jay Lawrence Smith \$1,500 to help his review of court files from the Grant County, West Virginia Circuit Court relating to a criminal court case. The Grant County Circuit Clerk provided the court files for Smith's inspection but charged \$1/page to make copies. When Smith said he would instead photograph the files with his phone, the clerk said no, then said he could do so but would still have to pay \$1/page. Smith has visited other West Virginia county courts,

and none has charged him for taking digital images of the files. Smith sued Grant County Circuit Court, lost, and appealed. A favorable ruling from the appeals court will send a strong message to clerks and judges that “copying fees” should not be used as a deterrent and hinderance to full and complete review of public records by members of the press or public.

9/6 RCFP Amicus Brief in Pitch v. United States (11th Circuit En Banc)

An appeal regarding the unsealing and disclosure of grand jury materials (in this case, involving a mass lynching that took place in Georgia in 1946). The judges’ panel held, as have other appeals courts, that a judge can unseal grand jury materials under both the Rule exceptions and the common law. But a recent D.C. Circuit opinion came to the opposite conclusion. The amicus brief argues that the full 11th Circuit should stick with the panel’s ruling and allow for disclosure in certain circumstances. The brief supports broader disclosure of public documents and information.

10/2 RCFP Amicus Brief in Martin v. Rollins (First Circuit)

This is a controversial case as it involves Project Veritas, which has engaged in some activity that arguably does not always adhere to the SPJ Code of Ethics. But the legal issue is an important one for journalists. The issue for a federal appeals court is whether the Massachusetts wiretapping statute, which requires two-party consent, is unconstitutional to the extent it prohibits secret recording of government officials, including the police, in the public performance of their duties even where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy. The RCFP brief argues that the public is served when both private citizens and the news media are able to record government officials, including the police, in the public performance of their duties.

10/14 RCFP Amicus - Georgia v. Public.Resource.Org (SCOTUS)

A U.S. Supreme Court case involving the ability—or lack thereof—to copyright a state’s official annotated code. (By way of explanation, annotated codes are compilations of statutes authored by the state legislature that include, in addition to the actual text of the statute, which *cannot* be copyrighted, summaries of judicial decisions, regulations and attorney general opinions relating to that statute.) PublicResource.org, a California nonprofit organization, won at the Eleventh Circuit, which found that “the People are the constructive authors and owners of these works, meaning that the works are intrinsically public domain material and, therefore, uncopyrightable,” but the state of Georgia appealed. The brief argues that this right is necessary to oversee and participate in government by quoting from what are often helpful interpretations or explanations of the law.

10/15 RCFP Amicus - Spectrum News NY1 v. NYPD (NY Appellate Division, 1st Dep’t)

We supported a New York cable news television station’s attempt to obtain body-worn camera footage from the New York Police Department under the state’s Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). The department denied NY1’s request for footage from five specific weeks, arguing, in part, that because making redactions to the videos would be

“unreasonably difficult,” FOIL does not mandate the disclosure of the footage. The brief argues that FOIL provides no basis for withholding records on the grounds that redacting portions would be too difficult, and that such claims of unreasonable burden are vastly overstated in light of modern technology. It also argues that, because the purpose of FOIL and the body-worn camera footage program is to increase transparency about law enforcement conduct, such footage must be timely released and not prohibitively expensive to request. A ruling holding that a hearing is required to determine if it is unreasonably burdensome for an agency to release a public record under FOIL would set a bad precedent, threatening the prompt release of records relating to matters of significant public concern and imposing additional costs on news organizations and the public.

11/1 RCFP Amicus -- Challenge to Email Warrant Non-Disclosure Order

We signed onto an amici brief in support of Microsoft’s challenge of a non-disclosure order under the Stored Communications Act in a federal case in New York. SPJ signed onto a similar amici brief in Washington state in 2016. However, Microsoft dropped that suit after the government agreed to limit its applications for non-disclosure orders—or gag orders preventing Internet providers from telling people when the government has obtained a warrant to read their e-mail during an investigation—to one year or less. In this case, a magistrate judge denied Microsoft’s motion to modify a non-disclosure order that had been extended for an additional year after the initial one-year gag period. Microsoft is asking for a review of the magistrate judge’s order. The brief argues that government surveillance and non-disclosure orders detrimentally affect newsgathering, reporter-source relationships and the free flow of information to the public.

11/6 RCFP Amicus: Gannett Satellite Information Network LLC v. New York State Thruway Authority (NY App. Div. - FOIL)

SPJ served as the lead amicus to support *The Journal News*, a Gannett paper that covers Westchester County, in a Freedom of Information Law case in the New York Appellate Division’s Third Department. This request for support came to us from the Deadline Club, SPJ’s New York City chapter.

The appeal challenges the trial court’s ruling that, even though the New York State Thruway Authority took nine months to produce documents related to the closing of the Tappan Zee Bridge and opening of the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, and then only after the paper sued for the records, the agency’s delay was not unreasonable, and thus the paper was not entitled to attorneys’ fees. The brief highlights the larger problem of routine denials of and delays in access to records, arguing that such policies greatly impede the news media’s ability to gather and promptly disseminate information about significant matters of public concern to the public. It also emphasizes the importance of FOIL fee-shifting provisions, which allow journalists to cost-effectively challenge such denials and delays.

11/7 RCFP Letter in Support of NPR Illinois Journalists

We supported the journalists at NPR Illinois, owned and operated by the University of Illinois with a letter, addressed to the school's Board of Trustees, urging it to grant the station's journalists an exemption from Title IX's mandatory reporting requirement. After the station—as part of a series examining professorial sexual misconduct at the state's colleges and universities—invited victims of sexual assault to share their experiences and promised anonymity to anyone who came forward, a Title IX coordinator told station leadership that its journalists qualified as “responsible employees” under Title IX, which would require them to report alleged sexual misconduct to the school. The letter argues that NPR Illinois journalists should not be required to report under Title IX and that mandating them to do so violates the Illinois reporter's privilege statute, which allows journalists to promise confidentiality to their sources. Mandatory reporting of journalists' confidential sources will chill coverage of the university's handling of misconduct and allow abuses like those already uncovered to continue in secret.

12/4 RCFP & NPR letter to SCOTUS re sealing

We joined RCFP and NPR in a letter to the Clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the increased frequency with which the Court has been granting motions to seal Court records in recent years. The letter asked the Court to adopt a proposed rule to establish a presumptive right of access to Court records that could be overcome only by a showing that the need for secrecy outweighs this presumption. The Court had granted sealing requests in just 2 cases in 1993 but 24 in 2010 and 45 cases last year. Routinely sealing court records, particularly when there is no justification for doing so, significantly impairs the news media's ability to report on some of the most important matters facing our country today—the issues and rights that are being adjudicated by the highest Court in the nation. The practice also sets a bad precedent for lower courts considering sealing motions that do not justify the need for secrecy above access.

12/4 Legal Defense Fund grant to Rob Melendez, a freelance journalist in the Orlando area

We awarded \$4,000 to a reporter seeking access to school board records from Volusia County, Florida that have been withheld from disclosure in violation of Florida's Sunshine Law. Melendez got a tip that a track coach working at Deltona High School had been investigated and reprimanded for posting racial and sexual comments, and at least one violent video, on Facebook. The school district responded to a public records request with a denial it had any complaints or professional standards investigations, but Melendez had a copy of a letter from the District to the track coach informing him of the results of the investigation into allegations against him. Melendez then learned of other students who claim they were sexually assaulted—both by fellow students and employees—at Deltona High School, as well as other District schools, but he has been unable to obtain access to records relating to any investigation or discipline surrounding the alleged incidents, and he believes the District is purposely trying to hide a pattern of

covering up sexual assaults that occur at Volusia County schools. The funds support his lawsuit seeking public access to government records.

12/5 SCOTUS amicus sign-on, Krakauer v. State of Montana

We signed onto an amicus brief in support of author Jon Krakauer's petition asking the U.S. Supreme Court to hear his freedom of information-related case. Krakauer is seeking access to the files of the state of Montana's higher-education commissioner, who overturned sanctions against the University of Montana's quarterback after a campus disciplinary board found him responsible for a sexual assault. In denying the records, the state relied on the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), which protects the privacy of student education records and is often misapplied to obstruct the right of public access. The amicus brief argues that the court below erroneously found that FERPA preempted state statutory and constitutional law, which, in Montana, provides a right of access to public records from state universities. Courts' far-too-common reliance on FERPA as a means to deny access to public records impedes the news media's ability to report on matters of paramount public concern

12/7 Legal Defense Fund Grant to Lake County Voices of Reason

We granted \$500 to the Lake County Voices of Reason ("LCVOR") in central Florida, a group of residents trying to prevent the relocation of a statue of a Confederate general from Washington, D.C. to a museum inside a Lake County historical courthouse. The group is suing the Lake County Board of County Commissioners to overturn a vote that occurred after back-channel communications between the five commissioners and the president of the Lake County Historical Society, who had proposed acquisition of the statue, in likely violation of Florida's Open Meetings Law. Back-room dealings undermine the intent of Florida's strong Sunshine Law and undermine open government

12/12 RCFP Amicus Brief in CNN v. Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Local Schools

We joined an amicus brief in support of CNN in an open records case before the Ohio Supreme Court that seeks the disclosure of high school disciplinary and other records related to Connor Betts, the gunman who fatally shot nine people outside a crowded bar in Dayton, Ohio last August. The school district denied access to the records, and the appellate court agreed, citing a state student privacy law that bars disclosure of non-directory student records without student consent. The brief argues that under longstanding common law principles, an individual's right of privacy terminates upon death. The appellate court's failure to apply that general rule undermines public policy and the principle of openness, and curtails the news media's ability to report on school disciplinary records of mass shooters, past reporting of which has served a strong public benefit.

12/17 RCFP Amicus in Perlman v. Vox (Delaware)

We joined an amicus brief in a Delaware appeals court case involving a defamation claim against The Verge. The Chancery Court ruled that a hyperlink in an online article republishes an earlier article so the one-year statute of limitations for defamation is

restarted. This contradicts a wide body of case law that hyperlinks do not republish the articles to which they direct readers. The brief argues that the ruling is erroneous and that given their important use in online journalism, hyperlinks should be encouraged, not deterred. If this rule of law is adopted by other courts, it would severely impact modern, online journalism and expose journalists and news media organizations to significantly increased defamation litigation.

12/19 RCFP Amicus in Libertarians v. NJ State Police (NJ Supreme Court - OPRA)

We joined an amicus brief in a New Jersey Open Records Act case pending before the state Supreme Court. The New Jersey State Police denied an open records act request from Libertarians for Transparent Government seeking the name, title, and date of separation for a state trooper who had been fired for “questionable associations” and engaging in “racially offensive behavior.” Both the trial and appellate courts upheld the agency’s denial despite the explicit statutory language, relying on another provision of the state Open Records Act that exempts personnel records that would include details beyond the officer’s name, title, date of separation and reason for such. The amicus brief argues the importance of recognizing the plain language of a statute and that access to these records is critical to reporting on matters of significant public interest, including patterns of police misconduct.

1/3/2020 RCFP Amicus Brief - City of Chicago v. Fraternal Order of Police (Illinois Supreme Court)

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief in a public records case before the Illinois Supreme Court involving the retention and disclosure of police misconduct records. Under the state Freedom of Information Act, complaint register files—or citizen complaints alleging police misconduct—are public and subject to disclosure, but a section of a collective bargaining agreement between the city of Chicago and the Fraternal Order of Police requires these records to be destroyed after five years. The city asked the trial court not to force the record destruction. The FOP appealed to the state high court. The brief argues that collective bargaining agreements and other contracts cannot trump a state’s public records law and outlines the strong public policy interests served by disclosure of police misconduct records.

1/12 media coalition amici brief in Karem v. Trump appeal (D.C. Cir.)

We joined RCFP in a brief to support *Playboy’s* White House correspondent Brian Karem’s legal challenge to restore his White House press pass. The White House Press secretary said Karem had violated “decorum” and suspended his security credentials for 30 days after an altercation with former White House aide Sebastian Gorka during a Rose Garden event. Karem sued in D.C. federal court seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction reinstating his hard pass. The trial court agreed that the suspension of his hard pass violated his due process rights, and the government appealed the ruling to the D.C. Circuit Court. Upholding the White House press secretary’s ability to suspend a member of the news media’s press pass based on vague

standards never previously or properly articulated sets a bad precedent for public information officers and other officials at all levels of government nationwide.

1/15 Indiana DOC v. Toomey - RCFP Amicus Brief

We served as co-lead in an amicus supporting an Indianapolis lawyer, Katherine Toomey, seeking access to records about the drugs the state Department of Corrections uses in carrying out executions.

The Department of Corrections denied Ms. Toomey's request for documents about the drugs, she sued, and the trial court found in her favor. The DOC appealed the ruling, but while that appeal was pending, the state legislature passed a statute that made lethal injection drug suppliers' identities confidential, including retroactively. Relying on the new secrecy statute, the DOC asked the trial court to modify its earlier order. The state Supreme Court is considering the case. The amicus brief argues that the statute, which prohibits pharmacists, pharmacies, wholesale drug distributors, and outsourcing facilities from identifying themselves as suppliers of lethal injection drugs to the state, even voluntarily, is a prior restraint that chills reporter-source communications. It also argues that the law denies the public's qualified First Amendment right of access to information about the source of the drugs used in executions and highlights the news media's longtime role in public scrutiny of the lethal injection process. A number of botched executions in recent years that, according to later reporting, involved concealed information about the sources of the drugs used show that this process requires accountability and transparency, not additional secrecy.

1/16 Letter Opposing Impeachment Trial Press Restrictions

We joined RCFP in a letter to Sens. McConnell and Schumer opposing the planned restrictions on the news media during the Senate impeachment trial of President Trump. The measures restricted the use of electronic devices, implemented additional security screening and prohibited reporters from questioning lawmakers as they moved about the Capitol. The letter asked the senators to reconsider the "overly restrictive regulations," noting that reporters must have the ability to respond quickly to rapid developments and need reasonable access to lawmakers as they deliberate. These restrictions impede the news media's ability to provide up-to-the-minute information about one of the most important proceedings to occur before the U.S. Senate.

1/23 RCFP Amicus Brief in Rainbow v. WPIX (NY App. Div., First Dep't)

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief in support of New York-based WPIX-TV in a defamation case brought by a public school teacher mistakenly named in a news article about another teacher with the same last name accused of bullying students. The trial court dismissed her complaint, finding that the news organization did not act in a "grossly irresponsible" manner—the standard used in New York for a story involving a private person but one that touches on a matter of public concern—when it relied on the mother of the allegedly bullied child as the source of information for the teacher's name. The plaintiff appealed. The brief argues that the *current* "gross irresponsibility" standard appropriately balances the need for accuracy with the practical realities of the news business, and recognizes that some errors are unavoidable, particularly given the

pressures of the 24-hour news cycle and the limited resources in many modern newsrooms. A weakened standard would make it more difficult for media defendants in New York to obtain early dismissal from defamation actions and would create greater risk for journalists to report on matters of public concern in the state.

1/29 DRAFT: M.G. v. Hestrin - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief in a California case involving access to wiretap applications and related documents after an investigation is closed. A retired California highway trooper sought access to post-investigation records related to the disproportionate number of wiretaps targeting him that the Riverside County courts authorized. The trial court denied his request, and he appealed. The amicus brief argues that the public has a constitutional right of public access to these documents under California's wiretap statute, and discusses the danger of government surveillance without public oversight.

1/30 Parekh v. CBS - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined RCFP in an anti-SLAPP case pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) laws allow early dismissal of meritless lawsuits stemming from an exercise of First Amendment rights. When the motion to dismiss is granted in the federal district court, as here with the CBS affiliate, defendants are entitled to an award of attorney's fees and costs under the statute. The plaintiff has appealed the trial court's dismissal of his claim under the Florida anti-SLAPP law and its award of fees and costs to CBS. Anti-SLAPP laws are a useful tool for news media organizations and other defendants in defamation actions and the fee shifting provision is a critical feature. The statutes have helped discourage meritless lawsuits, usually brought as a means to chill important speech on matters of public concern and prevent journalists and others from incurring significant litigation costs. The fee shifting provision is perhaps the most significant deterrent for plaintiffs considering bringing meritless defamation claims and would benefit journalists and news organizations.

2/1 Carroll County E911 v. Hasnie - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined the RCFP in an amicus brief to support a TV reporter seeking access to 911 audio recordings related to a 2016 fatal house fire in which four children died in Carroll County, Indiana. Carroll County E911 denied the request, citing an exemption under the state Access to Public Records Act ("APRA") for investigatory records of law enforcement agencies. The trial court ruled in the reporter's favor, and Carroll County E911 appealed. The amicus brief argues that not only does exempting 911 records under the investigatory records exception run contrary to the intent of the Indiana APRA, but it also poses a dangerous risk for abuse if 911 records are withheld simply because the recordings, or even portions of them, may be useful in a future investigation. The brief also demonstrates several instances where news media organizations have used 911 records to report on matters of public concern. Access to 911 recordings provides valuable insight into important matters like response-time delay, information that is

vital to helping a community understand how its first responders behave when lives are at stake.

2/13 La Liberte v. Reid - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief in an Anti-SLAPP case pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York. Over the past few years, the tide has been slowly shifting on whether state anti-SLAPP statutes should be applied in federal court, with more and more courts holding that they should not. This case involves a defamation claim against journalist Joy Reid and her Twitter and Instagram posts, comments and a picture of the plaintiff interacting with a boy during a city council hearing on immigration. The trial court granted Reid's motion-to-strike under the California anti-SLAPP law, and awarded Reid attorney's fees under the latter. The plaintiff has appealed. The amicus brief focuses on the argument that the fee-shifting provision of the California anti-SLAPP statute applies in federal court regardless of whether the motion-to-strike provision applies in federal court. Anti-SLAPP laws are a useful tool for defendants in defamation actions, including journalists and news organizations, and the fee shifting provision is a critical feature.

2/18 Kentucky Supreme Court in Kentucky Kernel FOI case

We supported a public records case brought by the Kentucky Kernel, the student newspaper at the University of Kentucky, involving access to records relating to a faculty member disciplined for sexual harassment. The Kernel sought documents relating to a university-conducted sexual misconduct investigation into former professor James Harwood. UK officials denied access to the records, a decision the newspaper appealed to state Attorney General Andy Beshear, who has the statutory authority to confidentially review the documents in question. But UK also denied access to Beshear, who then said that UK had violated the state Open Records Act. The amicus brief, led by the Kentucky Press Association and Student Press Law Center, argues that the university's reliance on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that governs access to public educational student information and records, to blanketly refuse compliance with the public records request is misplaced. It also argues that the question of how state universities respond to allegations of sexual misconduct by faculty toward students is a matter of public concern which the public has a right to obtain.

2/20 Madoff Compassionate Release Public Access to Victim Letters - RCFP Amicus Lett

We joined the RCF in a letter asking the federal court in Manhattan to make publicly available any letters from victims that have been submitted to the court or will be submitted in response to Bernie Madoff's request for a compassionate release. The RCFP letter points out that a fundamental principle of the American criminal justice system is implicated here: documents that are filed with the court, including records that are considered in sentencing or other incarceration-related decisions, are court records subject to a First Amendment right of access that can be overcome only to the

extent necessary to serve a compelling interest in keeping the documents secret. There is a strong public interest in gaining insight into the information relied upon by the government and the court in considering Madoff's request for compassion and leniency.

2/24 DRAFT News Media Coalition comments/FAA NPRM re: Remote Identification of UAS

We signed onto comments by a coalition of media organizations to a Federal Aviation Administration's ("FAA") Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("NPRM") on Remote Identification of Unmanned Aircraft Systems ("UAS"). We encouraged the FAA to limit the impact of rules governing drones on journalists and news organizations. One recommendation – asking the FAA to establish an "accredited news representative designation" that would exempt journalists operating drones in certain airspace from some of the rules – may appear problematic to the extent that it requires a definition of who qualifies as a "journalist." However, the "accredited" designation would be no different than requiring credentials for journalists to attend certain press conferences or participate in pool coverage.

2/27 RCFP Amicus Brief in *Becerra v. Superior Court* (CA Ct. App./CPRA)

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief to support the First Amendment Coalition and KQED in a California Public Records Act case that involves access to law enforcement records on firearm discharges, uses of force, sexual assault and dishonesty. The trial court ordered disclosure of the records, but the California attorney general refused to release records of law enforcement officers of *other* agencies, even though the AG possesses those records. The brief discusses why the new law should be interpreted broadly in favor of access. Even though the California law has been in effect for less than a year, it has already been the subject of a great deal of litigation, most of which has resulted in findings favoring public disclosure. A ruling that agencies need only release the relevant records of their *own* employees would undermine this pro-transparency trend in California and impede the ability of journalists to report on important law enforcement matters.

2/27 *Rojas v. FAA* - RCFP Amicus Brief

We signed onto an RCFP amicus brief in a FOIA case in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The records at issue in this case, filed by an aspiring air traffic controller whose application was denied, relate to the test that the FAA administers to applicants and considers in the hiring process. The Ninth Circuit three-judge panel ruled that FOIA Exemption 5, which prohibits public disclosure of certain intra-agency records, did not apply, and thus the records were public. The FAA had argued that the records were exempt because they involved documents that the FAA received from an outside agency, a consulting human resources firm. The amicus brief argues that the panel correctly decided the issue.

When courts expand the scope of FOIA exemptions beyond their plain language, the law's goal of increasing disclosure of government activity is undermined, and reporting

suffers. For example, information about matters of significant public interest and concern is often uncovered by examining the government's contracts with third parties.

3/13 The New Mexican v. PNM & BHP - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined an RCFP amicus brief that asks the New Mexico Supreme Court to review a lower court ruling from an attempt to obtain a prior restraint against the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. Three private companies along with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission ("PRC") sued the newspaper to prevent it from publishing records that the PRC inadvertently disclosed in response to a public records request. The paper countersued for malicious abuse of process and conspiracy, in response to the plaintiffs' efforts to obtain a prior restraint. The First Judicial District Court properly refused to grant the prior restraint but also dismissed the *New Mexican's* counterclaims under the *Noerr-Pennington* doctrine, which protects certain petitioning activity under the First Amendment. Application of the *Noerr-Pennington* doctrine in this case is problematic. The doctrine is not meant for a government agency and companies allied with the agency to shield themselves when they bring what is essentially a frivolous lawsuit to obtain a prior restraint against a newspaper. The brief argues that if the lower court's decision to dismiss the *New Mexican's* counterclaims under the *Noerr-Pennington* doctrine stands, it could inhibit reporting about matters of significant public interest and concern. New Mexico news organizations may be discouraged from such reporting if they face prior restraint litigation and are unable to recoup the costs of defending the lawsuits.

3/13 Tah v. Global Witness - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief in a case pending before the D.C. federal appellate court over the applicability of the D.C. Anti-SLAPP Act in federal court. Anti-SLAPP laws help defendants in defamation actions, including journalists and news organizations, as tools to discourage meritless lawsuits brought as a means to chill important speech on matters of public concern

3/16 US v. Stone - RCFP Amicus Brief

We joined RCFP in an amicus brief in support of a motion seeking access to juror questionnaires and the identification number of the jury forewoman in the Roger Stone prosecution. The brief relies on the First Amendment presumptive right of public access to voir dire proceedings, including juror questionnaires, as well as the public policy interest in promoting public understanding of the criminal justice system. Juror questionnaires often provide unique insight into the makeup of the panel tasked with passing judgment on a criminal defendant. It is particularly important in this high-profile case, where the impartiality and veracity of the jury foreperson have been challenged by the President and others.

3/27 Fed. R. Crim. P. 6(e) - RCFP Letter to Rules Committee

We joined RCFP in a letter in support of the Public Citizen Litigation Group ("PCLG") and several historical groups' request to amend the federal rule of criminal procedure governing access to grand jury records, including historically and socially significant

materials. The letter is directed to the committee that approves the rules of practice and procedure for the federal judiciary system. Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 6(e) codifies the tradition of secrecy surrounding grand jury proceedings, though it allows the court, by way of its supervisory authority over the grand jury, to approve some exceptions. Some federal appellate and many federal trial courts have interpreted the “supervisory authority” language broadly such that information not specifically named as an exception may be disclosed. However, last year the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled otherwise, holding that courts lack the “inherent authority” to disclose grand jury materials not covered by an explicit exception contained in Rule 6. The RCFP letter in support of the PCLG asks the committee to amend Rule 6(e) in a manner that recognizes the existence of the courts’ inherent authority to permit the release of grand jury materials in appropriate circumstances. Unsealed grand jury records provide unique insight into the inner workings of the criminal justice system as it prosecuted some of the nation’s most historically significant individuals.

4/ 3 Ones v. PBSA - RCFP Amicus Brief

We signed on an RCFP amicus brief in an Arkansas Supreme Court case governing access to court records. The case involves the interplay between an Arkansas Supreme Court administrative order, the state FOIA and the First Amendment right of access. The court clerk handling the request—primarily for docket sheets, charging instruments, and records reflecting the disposition of criminal charges—relied on the administrative order in denying the request; in the lawsuit challenging that denial, the requesting party, a Professional Background Screening Association (“PBSA”) member, argued that the First Amendment and common law right of access apply, while the trial court ruled that the state FOIA governs the issue. The amicus brief argues that the court records that the PBSA seeks are subject to the constitutional right of access and highlights the important news reporting that stems from public access to court records. It also argues that the administrative order should not be read to include a request for existing court records related to a person, so as to avoid a conflict with the First Amendment right of access. A holding by a state’s highest court that a First Amendment right of access does not apply to court records is a bad precedent that could make it exceedingly more difficult to obtain records and report about matters of significant public interest and concern to reporters in Arkansas.

Since the April report:

4/6 Gottwald v. Sebert (Dr. Luke v. Kesha) - Joined RCFP Amicus Brief

4/7 CNN v. FBI - RCFP Amicus Brief

4/8 Welsh-Huggins v. Office of the Prosecuting Attorney - OCOG & RCFP Amicus Brief

4/14 Soderberg v. Carrion - RCFP Amicus Brief

4/17 Soderberg v. Carrion - RCFP Amicus Brief

4/24 WJFW Defamation Suit - Letter of Support

5/7 Husch Blackwell v. WMATA - RCFP Amicus Brief

5/7 Center on Privacy & Tech. v. New York Police Dep't - RCFP Amicus B
5/9 Perry v. Hollingsworth - RCFP Amicus Brief (N.D. Cal.)
5/27 \$5,000 LDF grant to Barbara Petersen, a longtime open-government advocate in Florida in an open meetings lawsuit
5/29 ALDF v. Vaught (8th Cir) - RCFP Amicus Brief
5/30 Joined CFP Comments on OMB's government-wide FOIA fee guidelines
6/3 Philadelphia Bail Fund v. Arraignment Court Magistrate Judges - RCFP Amicus Brief
6/3 Gibson Bros, Inc. v. Oberlin College - RCFP Amicus Brief
6/10 Dababneh v. Lopez - RCFP amicus brief
6/22 Awarded \$2500 to Christa Westerberg, a Madison, Wisconsin, lawyer and co-vice president of the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council ("WFIC"), to fund an amicus brief in a case pending in the Wisconsin Court of Appeals addressing the fee-shifting provision of the Wisconsin Open Records Law.

Top SPJ Benefits, Tangible and Intangible

SPJ Executive Director John Shertzer requested the SPJ Membership Committee decide—within the 12-member committee—its top 5 tangible and top 5 intangible benefits of SPJ membership. This was no small task. There are numerous benefits to being a member of SPJ, but each individual membership type (e.g., students, professionals, retirees, associates/supporters, faculty, freelancers, broadcasters, newspaper journalists, digital journalists, early career, mid-career, late career, etc.) all value some benefits more than others.

To do this, each committee member provided their own individual top 5 benefits both tangible and intangible. They were compiled into a master list of 16 tangible benefits and 17 intangible benefits, then the committee was asked to choose five of each. Here are the top 5 most popular selections, and the a few of the least popular (bottom):

Top 5 tangible

Workshops, seminars, conferences (6 responses out of 12)
Access to resources (5)
Legal Defense Fund (5)
Local chapter benefit(s) (5)
Professional development and career support (5)

Bottom - E-newsletters (0); Quill (2)

Top 5 intangible

Journalism advocacy (10 responses out of 12)
Networking (8)
Association with Code of Ethics (6)
Connection to industry leaders and industry insight (6)
Being part of a recognized journalism community (5)

Bottom - Holding self to higher standard/adhering to Code of Ethics (1); Opportunities through local chapter connections (1)

It is worth noting that the SPJ Membership Committee itself includes a diverse cross section of membership representing the majority of membership types listed above. Though this is not by any means a scientific study, and the benefits were handwritten by each member and not chosen from a predetermined list, it may be a good indication of what has the most universal value across a majority of membership types. Recruitment efforts could benefit from narrowly focusing promotional materials on these top benefits.

Prepared by Colin DeVries, SPJ Membership Committee Chair

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 27, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: Colin DeVries, Membership Committee Chair

Re: SPJ Membership Committee Report

Executive Summary

The SPJ Membership Committee consists of 12 members representing 10 of SPJ's 12 regions. Additional members from Regions 6 and 9 are sought. Here are some things we have been working on during the months of April and May:

- Promoting resources to help journalists financially, including local chapter emergency fund programs and the SPJ Journalists' Emergency Fund.
- Identifying top tangible/intangible SPJ benefits that may help focus future promotions for recruitment. See attached.
- Forming a special subcommittee to focus solely on growth and retention among student members, including creating a resource package for campus chapters and journalism programs to keep students engaged with SPJ. This work began in June with the goal of having something to share with campus chapters by fall semester.

Current/Proposed Initiatives

- Form Special Subcommittee on Student Membership
- Assist in providing member support during pandemic
- Develop student sponsorship campaign
- Develop promotional campaign around top universal benefits
- Develop testimonials from Legal Defense Fund recipients
- Integrated membership promotions around SPJ Communities (Gen J, Freelance, Digital, International, Community Journalism)
- Help develop a better system to roll student members into post-grad membership upon graduation (e.g., automatic connection for post-grads into Gen J Community)
- A potential date for an "ask a friend to join SPJ" campaign

Request

- Monthly membership reports – # of members by type (student, pro, post-grad, etc.)

MEMORANDUM



Date: June 20, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: Jane Primerano, RC Committee Chair

Re: SPJ Regional Coordinators Committee Report

The RCs ran into the same roadblocks as everyone else during this pandemic. Planning for Regional Conferences was well underway when COVID-19 reached epidemic proportions. There was much discussion among the RCs and I reached out to them individually, except for Region 3 which holds its "spring" regional in the fall. After serious consideration which varied depending on when the regional conferences were originally scheduled we decided to cancel or postpone the conferences for the safety of our attendees.

The RCs also altered the requirements for chapter grants to emphasize virtual programming. We already have one application for the August deadline. A number of the chapters are taking advantage of the Zoom capability created by HQ, doing some terrific programs, including programs addressing the safety of journalists covering the COVID-19 crisis and the protests.

With the assistance of HQ, we were able to announce our MOE winners. While nobody was totally happy with not having presentations, the virtual solutions went smoothly.

The RCs are looking forward to reviewing the annual reports and financial reports which are coming in in advance of the new deadline.

We have three RCs running for reelection and a candidate has stepped forward in a fourth Region. I am working with the other two RCs to find candidates in their regions.

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 24, 2020

To: SPJ Board of Directors

From: Dan Kubiske and Elle Toussi, co-chairs

Re: SPJ International Community Report



- Advocated for (and received) SPJ support of Article 19 campaign to preserve social media data ([Coronavirus: 75 organizations call on social media platforms to preserve, publish content moderation data](#))
- Established a relationship with One Free Press Coalition to help build greater awareness of threats to journalists around the world.
- Developed close ties with World Fixer, to help independent correspondents find support with overseas assignments.
- Submitted proposals to EIJ 2020 with support and cooperation of other SPJ communities and local chapters.
 - Reporting on Iran with Mary Louise Kelly of NPR
 - Panel on how foreign correspondents cover US election
 - Session on Human Trafficking
 - Exploration of European and US “Right to be forgotten” provision in social media
 - Arranged for one-on-one sessions on personal security for journalists looking to do assignments overseas with Frontline Freelance, ACOS Alliance and CPJ. (Done in cooperation with Freelance Community)
- Began weekly #ICTalk series in May with journalists and experts around the world. The full version are available on YouTube only for IC and SPJ members.
 - Diego Mendoza on press freedom and civil rights in Hong Kong, a student journalist’s view
 - Kassy Cho on using social media to tell stories
 - Will Ripley, CNN, on life as a foreign correspondent in Asia
 - George Steinmetz on drone photography and telling stories around the world with a camera
 - Sonia Shah, author “Pandemic”, on covering COVID-19 and related health issues
 - Maria Ressa on press freedom and threats to journalists in the Philippines
 - **Upcoming**
 - Chris Lively, CBS correspondent in Rome (June 30)
 - Gavin Phipps of IRCT Radio on press freedom in Taiwan; Taiwan-China relations; Taiwan and the WHO (July 14)
 - Sanford Ungar, former VOA director, on the state of VOA in the Trump Administration (July 21)

- Bill Clifford and Chris Hyslop on the World Affairs Council, making foreign news less foreign sources for local journalism with a global twist. (July 28)
- Newsletter launched to promote talks for now and will include resources in the coming months for our community.
- Promoted statements by SPJ leadership in defense of VOA editorial independence
- Connected SPJ Ethics Committee and American Center in Moscow for discussion on journalism ethics with Russian journalists.

TO: Patti Gallagher Newberry, President, Society of Professional Journalists
Board of Directors, Society of Professional Journalists

FROM: Colin DeVries, Membership Committee Chair
Hilary Niles, Freelance Community Chair
Elle Toussi, International Community Co-Chair
Dan Kubiske, International Community Co-Chair
Jonathan Make, Immediate Past President, SPJ DC

DATE: June 27, 2020

SUBJECT: Appeal to the Board Re: Transparent AMS Implementation Process

Dear Members of the SPJ Board,

We are excited about the prospect of an efficient and integrated association management system (AMS) being built by Impexium to replace the outdated service provided by iMIS. This new AMS has vast implications for the health of the organization, as it touches nearly every aspect of SPJ. It will ideally make billing and administrative tasks easier for staff, improve member databases, and enhance experiences for members, volunteer leaders and SPJ staff.

Given the critical importance of this new system, and the immediate impact it will have for staff, new and current members, and chapter, regional and national leaders, we request the opportunity to participate in the construction of features that could improve the efficacy of the system. We also understand this new system could have implications in attracting association management clients. Added functionality and innovative integration may make this more attractive to potential clients.

A listening session or open forum led by SPJ staff directly involved in the implementation of this new AMS, with participation by volunteer leaders and end users, would be beneficial to its success. Some ideas we would like to see implemented include:

- Enhanced integration with Communities based on associated medium
- Enhanced integration with Communities and Chapters based on home and/or business address
- Automated monthly chapter, community or regional reports showing new, lapsing and total members
- Improved integration between Freelance Community and Freelance Directory

If these features are already going to be included, a formal presentation to all stakeholders involved would be beneficial and may spark additional innovations to ultimately reduce staff workload while enhancing the overall user experience. We are here to help support these efforts in any way we can.

MEMO

TO: SPJ National Board

FROM: Hilary Niles, on behalf of the SPJ Freelance Community

DATE: June 22, 2020

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL: SPJ Press Badge benefit

Overview

The SPJ Freelance Community requests the national board's consideration of making a new benefit available to SPJ members: a photo ID press badge. Based on internal discussions within the community and overwhelming response to an informal survey we released on the subject, we believe this would benefit a wide range of members — especially freelancers, and also staff reporters at small news outlets with limited resources. Both constituencies often do not have access to a press badge to help them gain access to certain places and events.

Creating a press badge program within SPJ would materially address a very real and increasingly urgent problem for journalists. It cannot be considered an absolute solution: Credentialing is handled differently in virtually every agency, political subdivision, company and venue in the U.S. and abroad. Therefore, an SPJ press badge could serve as no guarantee of access. That said, our survey indicates:

1. press badges from other professional organizations can be helpful in some cases,
2. the reporting of many journalists is routinely limited by the absence of such a badge, and
3. there appears to be a healthy demand for this service from SPJ members and non-members alike.

Survey Results

RESPONDENTS: The survey was completed by 78 respondents, about 75% of whom reported that they're current SPJ members.

DOCUMENTATION: Roughly half of respondents reported that they are not provided with documentation from their assigning editors affirming that they're covering a particular event for that newsroom. However, this statistic masks a larger problem for freelancers, who often need to pre-report by attending events *before* pitching a story, much less landing an assignment.

LIMITED ACCESS: At least half of respondents reported that they had experienced difficulty gaining access to a building or event because they did not have a photo ID of some sort that identified them as a journalist.

INTEREST: The vast majority of respondents — 91% — said they would be interested in obtaining an SPJ press badge if the organization offered one to members only, and an additional 6% of respondents said they would consider it. This result is notable because it includes non-members, at least one lapsed member, and respondents who have access to press badges (albeit some that are not photo-based) from other sources.

FEES: Considering the material and operational costs that SPJ would incur in the course of implementing such a benefit, respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay up to \$10, up to \$20, up to \$30, or nothing at all on top of current SPJ membership dues in order to obtain a press badge.

- 10.3% responded that they would not be willing to pay an additional fee
- 29.5% responded that they would be willing to pay up to \$10
- 35.9% responded that they would be willing to pay up to \$20
- 24.4% responded that they would be willing to pay up to \$30

When asked if their willingness to pay would change if a portion of the funds were dedicated to a Freelance Fund for distribution to freelance journalists by the SPJ Freelance Community board through

grants and/or scholarships, 62.8% responded that they would be willing to pay and/or would be willing to pay more.

ADDITIONAL GEAR: Respondents also showed interest in obtaining additional press gear through SPJ:

- Fluorescent vest: 79%
- Helmet: 40%
- Mask or Respirator: 67%

Key Elements

Based on research into other press badge programs, as well themes and trends in many open-ended survey responses, the Freelance Community suggests that SPJ press badges should:

- require badge holders to certify that they pledge to uphold the SPJ Code of Ethics
- include the member's name and photo, the word "PRESS" and "Society of Professional Journalists" and SPJ's logo on the front
- articulate on the back that this person is a member in good standing of SPJ, and state that the member has pledged to uphold the SPJ Code of Ethics
- be issued with a lanyard
- be sized and designed in a manner that maximizes visibility when worn around the neck
- be of high-quality material and production
- be renewable with SPJ membership, and include an "expiration date" of sorts that matches the expiration date of the journalist's SPJ membership
- be available to the following member types who pay on an annual, 2-year or 3-year basis: professional, retired, lifetime, post-grad and college student

Other Considerations

PRICING: The Freelance Community at this time refrains from recommending a specific fee for the badge, since research will be required into the cost of various production methods. That said, we

request that a portion of the fees be dedicated to a fund that offsets the cost of the badge for freelancers with limited resources.

MONTHLY RATE MEMBERS: Logistically, it does not make sense to produce a press badge with an expiration date for members who pay their dues monthly, as the expiration date would need to be updated monthly. That said, members who pay monthly due to limited resources would be encouraged to pursue financial assistance through the organization to have the cost of the badge subsidized.

VERIFICATION: The question has come up of how to verify that the photo submitted for the badge matches the identity of the member. If the press badge is requested and paid for by the member through their SPJ account, it seems unlikely that someone would create a way for their own name to be used by another person. However, if this is a concern for the board, the member could be required to submit with their application for the badge a copy of their driver's license, non-driver ID or passport — similar to the identity verification process for employment. An additional certification could be required that the applicant is, in fact, who they profess to be, and that the submitted photo is truly them.

PROMOTION: Two survey respondents, including one editor at a startup website, suggested inviting newsrooms to underwrite the cost of their staff reporters' SPJ memberships and accompanying press badges, because it would be such a benefit to the newsroom for their reporters to have badges.

COLLABORATION: SPJ and all of journalism is stronger when journalists work together, and in particular when diversity is represented in the press. This benefit does not need to be limited to SPJ members. Instead, it could serve the whole profession for SPJ to create this press badge program in concert with our sister organizations, including NAJA, NAHJ, NABJ and AAJA. (Simple design solutions could resolve the issue of logos and branding.) By joining forces, responsibilities could be distributed and an economy of scale could be achieved to maximize efficiencies and, more importantly, to extend the program's benefits for our colleagues and the public we serve.

Thank you for your consideration.