

Free Press, Free Institutions, Free People.

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.



REPORT TO DONORS

JANUARY 2018 - JUNE 2019

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FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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DEAR FRIENDS,

These are difficult times for American journalism and press freedom.

Our pro bono legal support is more important than ever to protect newsgathering rights.

Corporations have consolidated and advertising revenue has slowed. The rise of social media has changed the way we access the news. In response, newsrooms across the country have shrunk, local papers have shuttered, and the number of freelance journalists has increased.

At the same time, we are witnessing a growing hostility toward the news media in the United States.

Government officials have blocked journalists from courtrooms and briefings and stopped them at the border; they've denied journalists access to records and searched their property.

These threats are occurring across the country, at every level of government, but often hit hardest are those already lacking protections due to industry changes – freelancers, small newsrooms, and independent publications.

Many of the past year's biggest news stories required legal support to make it to the front page, the top of the hour, or your newsfeed.

Every day, we provide pro bono legal services to journalists breaking those stories.

With your support, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press actively protects journalists – and your access to information – as it has done for nearly five decades.

While roadblocks to investigative reporting have emerged, our pressing need for these stories has not diminished. As journalists and news organizations face new challenges, our lawyers will be there to support them and their crucial work.

The battles we fight today offer us valuable opportunities to create a better, more informed future.

Thank you for standing with us, and with news organizations across the country, in support of a free press and the First Amendment.



Bruce Brown
Executive Director



Stephen J. Adler
Steering Committee Chairman
Editor-in-Chief, Reuters



WHO WE ARE

The Reporters Committee was founded in 1970 by leading journalists and media lawyers in response to an unprecedented wave of government subpoenas forcing reporters to name confidential sources.

Since then, through the support of generous donors like you, we have served as the nation's premier defender of the legal rights of journalists.

Our mission is to protect the right to gather and distribute the news; to keep government accountable by ensuring access to public records, meetings, and courtrooms; and to preserve the principles of free speech and

unfettered press, as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Our legal services and resources have cemented our role as a leader in First Amendment discussions. Since January 2018, the Reporters Committee has been named in more than 1,000 news articles about press freedom in the U.S.

Your support makes headlines like these possible:

Chicago Tribune

BREAKING NEWS **NEWS**

News media return to state's high court to try to end secrecy over Officer Van Dyke's murder case

The New York Times

After Police Raid and a Hearing, a San Francisco Freelancer Will Get His Property Back

The Daily Progress

SPOTLIGHT

Charlottesville judge rules that state police must release Aug. 12 operational plan within 30 days

n p r

LAW

Supreme Court Orders Documents Unsealed In Death Penalty Case

THE REPORTERS COMMITTEE BY THE NUMBERS

FROM JANUARY 2018 TO JUNE 2019, YOUR SUPPORT POWERED:

77 friend-of-the-court briefs and letters

40 active litigation matters

Assistance to **587** hotline inquiries

Pre-publication vetting assistance on

13 investigative journalism projects

Training for more than **3,500** journalists, lawyers, and students

In the past year and a half, we've seen rising threats designed to intimidate the press and the public: subpoenas, libel suits, and frivolous litigation aimed at chilling speech.

At the same time, anti-press rhetoric, suspensions of press credentials, arrests of reporters, and even physical violence against the media have escalated. The challenges are widespread.

That's where the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press comes in.

With your help, our team has expanded to ensure journalists have the resources they need to report the news.

Your contributions provide pro bono legal representation and other legal resources, friend-of-the-court briefs, and policy advocacy to protect First Amendment freedoms and newsgathering rights.

We also recently announced our expansion through the Local Legal Initiative, which we have created to support local journalists in communities across the U.S.



“Of the several means by which I might support our First Amendment freedoms, I find RCFP to be among the more significant, especially with regard to press freedoms, though perhaps not the most well-known.

The large media corporations have resources that the people and organizations you support tend not to have. That commitment by RCFP to those people and organizations in pursuit of this cause strongly appeals to me.

– Reporters Committee donor Steven P. Starkovich

FUNDING STATE AND LOCAL INITIATIVES

JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION SUPPORT NATIONAL EXPANSION

We were honored in February 2019 when the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation chose to make a transformational investment of \$10 million in our endowment.

The gift will help us expand to provide direct legal services to more journalists at the local level. For the first time in our 50-year history, multiple Reporters Committee lawyers will be based in different locations across the country to support local enterprise and investigative journalism through our Local Legal Initiative.

Legal counsel is sometimes hard to find or afford for many investigative journalists working independently or in ever-leaner newsrooms. While we will continue to provide legal services at full strength from our Washington, D.C., office, this initiative will bring our expertise directly into jurisdictions where we can further our impact.

This grant from the Knight Foundation will be matched by other contributions as we launch a new fundraising campaign to sustain our regionally focused work.

E. W. SCRIPPS COMPANY CREATES FELLOWSHIP FOR PRESS FREEDOM

In June 2019, The E.W. Scripps Company and the Reporters Committee announced a new partnership focused on supporting local enterprise and investigative broadcast journalism, bolstering access to public records, and encouraging greater government transparency.

“This support will allow us to scale our legal work in innovative ways and expand our ability to serve journalists most in need of legal support. Local journalism is the bedrock of informed communities, but the newsgathering and other challenges journalists face covering local stories are placing that vital work at risk.”

— Katie Townsend, Legal Director

This six-year, \$600,000 gift establishes the E.W. Scripps Fellow, a legal fellowship program that will bring legal support to journalists that too often lack the necessary resources for newsgathering.

The first Scripps Fellow began work in fall 2019, and has expanded our capacity to support journalists at the state and local levels.



Bruce Brown (left) and David Boardman (right) at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards ceremony

HOLLYWOOD FOREIGN PRESS ASSOCIATION MAKES GIFT AT GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS

At the 76th Annual Golden Globe Awards® ceremony in January 2019, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association announced a \$1 million grant to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

The grant will go toward providing legal services and support to state and local journalists. A portion of the funds has been used in partnership with other press freedom organizations to develop a public campaign to engage more people about the importance of press freedom.

The Washington Post

PRESS FREEDOM PARTNERSHIP

PROMOTING THE FREE PRESS

The Reporters Committee, Committee to Protect Journalists, and Reporters Without Borders were selected as the inaugural partners in November 2018 for The Washington Post's press freedom partnership – an initiative that aims to highlight organizations working to promote press freedom and raise awareness of the rights of journalists.

As a part of this partnership, the Reporters Committee ran the following full-page ad in the print edition of The Washington Post on Jan. 28, 2019.

Most Americans believe a free press is important. But most also say it's not at risk in the U.S.

IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR A SIGN

Evacuated because of dangerous packages.
Equipment damaged on assignment.
Sued and arrested in response to coverage.
Pepper sprayed and tear gassed.
Received death threats.
Had news vans set on fire.
Physically assaulted.
Fought cyberattacks.
Faced censorship.
Harassed online.
Credentials revoked.
Combated misinformation.
Kicked out of public meetings.
Shut out of courtrooms.
Denied public records.
Booed in public.
Subpoenaed for confidential sources.
Murdered.

THIS IS IT.

Our free press needs defending.
rcfp.org/getinvolved

**REPORTERS
COMMITTEE**
FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Data on Americans' views of press freedom from research conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner and Echelon Insights.

OUR IMPACT

In order to expose the truth and deliver important information to the public, journalists often seek access to government records on matters of public interest.

From federal agencies that may not be household names to the highest court in the land, reporters need legal support to keep officials accountable. Through litigation and friend-of-the-court briefs, our lawyers go to bat for reporters in the fight for access.

We help journalists across the country with their requests, and have succeeded in obtaining access to sealed materials from local governments all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Transparency About Gas Leaks

For communities across America, the construction of oil and gas pipelines and the specter of environmentally damaging leaks are a major source of public concern.

Unfortunately, a lack of government transparency often hampers reporting on these issues.

In February 2018, E&E News reporter Mike Soraghan learned that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration had ordered Cheniere Energy Inc. to shut down and repair two tanks after inspectors discovered leaks at a facility in Cameron Parish, Louisiana.

Soraghan knew that this was a development the public needed to know about, so he

wanted to cover an administrative hearing on the leaks and shutdown. However, PHMSA hearings were usually closed to the public and press.

“We have Keystone XL Pipeline, we have Dakota Access Pipeline – these are big, controversial projects out there, and we need to start asserting this transparency right now before it’s a big crisis.”

– Mike Soraghan, E&E News

Reporters Committee attorneys immediately requested access, and through our efforts, the government relented and allowed journalists in the room. Because it could cover the hearing in person, E&E News was able to provide a comprehensive report of Cheniere’s safety plans and the broader environmental impacts of its natural gas export facilities.



“We really haven’t done anything like this before. We’ve filed a million Freedom of Information Act requests, but we mostly cover congressional hearings where access is pretty much understood.

We have not had much occasion to storm in, palm on the table, and demand access. We needed some guidance on this, and that’s exactly where the Reporters Committee came in.

– Mike Soraghan, Reporter, E&E News



“When I saw that the Supreme Court, without an apparent second thought, was putting under seal part of the Alabama brief in a death case, I really could hardly believe my eyes.

So, I went to the NPR legal department and to the Reporters Committee. I think the lawyers at the Reporters Committee put in several all-nighters over the next few days, and they produced a really wonderful brief that forced the court to ask Alabama to respond. Within a legal nanosecond, the state basically said, “Oh, never mind.”

It was a victory worth working hard for, but I couldn’t have managed it without the Reporters Committee, and hopefully, the Supreme Court won’t put things under seal without thinking about it in the future.

– Nina Totenberg, Correspondent, Legal Affairs, NPR

Public Access in Death Penalty Cases

Midazolam, a drug increasingly used as part of the lethal injection protocol in multiple states, is facing controversy over its effectiveness.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the use of midazolam is legal, critics say that it does not render patients fully unconscious and unable to feel pain before the other drugs are administered – resulting in a painful, extended execution.

In May 2019, Alabama death row inmate Christopher Price requested an emergency stay of execution to challenge the use of midazolam in the state’s protocol.

In an unusual decision, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the state of Alabama’s request to seal

and redact documents concerning its protocol before denying Price’s request for a stay. He was executed the following day, on May 30, 2019.

The Reporters Committee and National Public Radio filed a motion to unseal the documents related to this case. We argued that Alabama had no “legitimate interest” that justified sealing records in a case that would benefit from public scrutiny, noting that “the state did not provide any explanation for its asserted need for secrecy.”

The court granted our motion to unseal in June 2019. This ruling allows for continued public oversight of the lethal injection process and ensures that the public can be informed about the workings of the court and the conduct of their elected officials.



“When the Supreme Court improperly entered an order sealing the record in an Alabama death penalty case, NPR reached out to the Reporters Committee for help.

The Reporters Committee quickly rose to the challenge, preparing first-rate, Supreme Court-worthy papers on a very tight schedule. They were already familiar with the legal issues, quickly mastered the complicated facts, and prepared very fine briefs in about a week, start to finish. The court apparently found the papers as compelling as we did, granting our motions to intervene and to unseal the record about two weeks later.

– Jon Hart, Chief Legal Officer, NPR

TOGETHER,

WE STAND UP FOR PRESS FREEDOM IN THE COURTS.

To hold politicians accountable to the will of their constituents, we need to be informed.

When journalists are blocked from gathering the news, people across the country are left without information about issues that are important to their communities.

With your generous support, the Reporters Committee fights in court for access to information about pressing issues. Our attorneys protect the rights of journalists through litigation and friend-of-the-court briefs.

Arguing for Police Oversight in Chicago

In 2014, then-police officer Jason Van Dyke shot and killed 17-year-old Laquan McDonald in Chicago. Independent journalist Jamie Kalven's reporting on McDonald's death, which included evidence that conflicted with the official police narrative, led to a criminal investigation and multiple prosecutions.

The Reporters Committee became involved in the case in 2017, when Van Dyke's lawyers subpoenaed Kalven to force him to reveal his source. We filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of a coalition of 19 media organizations in support of Kalven. Van Dyke's lawyers subsequently withdrew the subpoena.

While working in support of Kalven, we also learned that the case didn't have a public docket. All filings were being made directly with the judge, leaving the press and public completely in the dark.

The Reporters Committee intervened with a coalition of Chicago news organizations in the Van Dyke trial, as well as the trial of three police officers who were accused of conspiring to obstruct justice in the case. Because of our efforts, the court released a public docket and unsealed critical information in the cases.

Making the Case for Transparency in Charlottesville

In August 2017, the "Unite the Right" rally for white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, left 35 injured and three dead: 32-year-old

protester Heather Heyer, who was killed when a self-described neo-Nazi crashed his car into a crowd of protesters, and two Virginia state troopers, Lt. H. Jay Cullen and Berke M.M. Bates, who were killed in a helicopter crash while monitoring the events.

This escalation of violence – in spite of the presence of law enforcement – raised questions about how the city and state police departments had planned for the rally.

Reporters Committee attorneys stepped in to represent freelance journalist Natalie Jacobsen in a lawsuit to obtain the Charlottesville Police and Virginia State Police operations plans for the rally.

The Charlottesville Police Department plan has since been released. A redacted version of the Virginia State Police plan has been released as well, and the Reporters Committee is currently in the process of challenging these redactions.

Suing for Records About A Secret Government Database

In March 2019, NBC 7 in San Diego reported that the U.S. government had created a secret database of journalists, activists, and social media influencers in connection with asylum and immigration issues at the U.S./Mexico border.

The Reporters Committee and NBC 7 investigative reporter Tom Jones submitted separate Freedom of Information Act requests

to four government agencies, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection, for records related to the database.

When our requests were ignored, Reporters Committee lawyers filed a lawsuit asking the federal district court in Washington, D.C., to order the agencies to immediately process the request and release the records.

“If our First Amendment means anything, it’s that the government cannot retaliate against journalists based on the content of their reporting. Our free press must be able to travel freely to witness firsthand what’s happening at our borders and bring that news to the public.”

– Gabe Rottman,
Technology and Press Freedom Project Director

Opposing “Gag Orders” in Baltimore

For years, Baltimore routinely required victims of police misconduct to sign a “non-disparagement” clause, or “gag order,” in order to settle their cases. This practice ensured that details of police violence were hidden from the public.

In 2012, Ashley Overbey Underwood signed a gag order when she settled a case against the city after being assaulted by Baltimore police. Baltimore later withheld half of her settlement after she posted about her assault online – and so Underwood sued again, this time for the remainder of her settlement. The Baltimore Brew, a local news outlet, joined her as a co-plaintiff, arguing that the gag order policy denied them their right to gather newsworthy public information from victims of police misconduct.

We filed a friend-of-the-court brief, written in collaboration with Davis Wright Tremaine’s Lisa Zycherman, with 19 media organizations in support of the Brew and Underwood. The brief argued that Baltimore’s gag order policy restricted journalists from reporting on people who had settled cases – and therefore stopped the news media from accurately reporting on issues of significant public interest.

In July 2019, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Baltimore’s mandatory gag order practice was unconstitutional.

In September 2019, the Reporters Committee testified before the Public Safety Committee in support of legislation banning the use of gag orders in city settlements for police brutality and discrimination cases. On Oct. 28, Baltimore City Council unanimously passed the bill.

Supporting the Right to White House Access

In November 2018, the White House stripped CNN correspondent Jim Acosta of his “hard pass” (the security credential that allowed him access to White House facilities) following an exchange with President Donald Trump during a press conference.

Just hours after CNN filed a complaint against the White House, the Reporters Committee underscored the importance of the case for press rights with a friend-of-the-court brief we authored with lawyers at Georgetown’s Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection. Acosta’s hard pass was later restored.

Shining Light on Allegations of Sexual Assault

For years, Virginia Roberts Giuffre had alleged that when she was a teenager, she had been a victim of sex trafficking by financier Jeffrey Epstein.

In 2015, Roberts Giuffre filed a libel lawsuit against Epstein’s associate Ghislaine Maxwell. The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York entered a blanket sealing order in the suit, which was settled in 2017. Over 150 filings were submitted under seal, many related to the investigation into Epstein’s alleged sex-trafficking operation. When the Miami Herald moved to unseal the documents in this case, the Reporters Committee filed a coalition brief in support of its motion.

In July 2019, the federal appeals court ordered the unsealing of the summary judgment record. This release of information allowed the Miami Herald to publish new material on Epstein as a part of the wave of stories released in July 2019 exploring his alleged crimes.

OUR WORK, CONTINUED

Pursuing the Truth About the Opioid Epidemic

Experts have reported that from 2006 to 2012, pharmaceutical companies poured opioids into U.S. communities – some places with more than 100 pills per person per year – even as overdoses increased.

Almost 2,000 state, local, and tribal governments have sued the companies for their involvement in the opioid epidemic. This consolidated lawsuit, which is currently being litigated in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, could result in billions of dollars in damages and impact millions of Americans.

HD Media and The Washington Post sought the release of Drug Enforcement Administration data about the number of opioids distributed in each county. The Reporters Committee and a coalition of 36 media organizations stepped up to support the fight for access.

In a win for transparency, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit held in June 2019 that the district court could not deny records requests for county-level data on pharmaceutical companies' opioid sales. The data that has since been released has shed light on the companies involved in the epidemic, as well as the distribution tactics that led to the current crisis.

Protecting Reporter's Privilege

In February 2019, a source sent San Francisco-based freelance journalist Bryan Carmody a leaked police report related to the then-mysterious death of public defender Jeff Adachi. Carmody provided these materials to several news outlets.

In April, the San Francisco Police Department asked Carmody to disclose the identity of his source. He refused. Then, in May, officers executed search warrants for Carmody's home and office as part of the leak investigation. During the raid, police seized his electronic devices, notes, and documents.

This use of search warrants to identify a reporter's confidential sources and seize unpublished material was a clear violation of the California Shield Law. It was also done in spite of a federal law, the Privacy Protection Act, which provides similar protections.

We filed a friend-of-the-court brief with 59 media organizations, including 19 California-based groups, urging the court to return Carmody's materials and arguing that search warrants like the ones executed against Carmody present a threat to newsgathering.

We also filed a separate motion with the First Amendment Coalition and the Northern California Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists to unseal all search warrants in the case, including the probable cause statements, and lists of inventory seized. Since then, Carmody's work product has been returned and warrant materials have been unsealed.

There were other troubling aspects of the raid. FBI agents were present during the raid – there to “interview Carmody,” according to an FBI spokesperson. Their presence suggested a federal angle to the case, which led the Reporters Committee to sue the FBI, the Justice Department's Criminal Division, and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys seeking all records related to Carmody from multiple national and local government agencies. Our complaint alleged that the government failed to comply with statutory deadlines and unlawfully withheld records.

Both the Criminal Division and the EOUSA have acknowledged the Reporters Committee's request but failed to provide any responsive documents by the deadline. The FBI denied the request, and their denial was upheld by the Justice Department.

TOGETHER,

WE EMPOWER JOURNALISTS TO BREAK CRUCIAL STORIES.

With your contributions, journalists across the country have access to the information they need to pursue the truth.

The services offered by the Reporters Committee's attorneys and staff provide a lifeline for reporters.

LEGAL GUIDES

We publish and regularly update guides on topics including state and federal open government laws, reporters' shield protections around the country, and access to court documents and proceedings.

These guides are invaluable sources of information on journalists' rights – and your support ensures that they are easily accessible online for free.

“The Open Government Guide is such an important guide for advocacy groups, for reporters who work with public records. Just having a clear guide is extremely important to be able to move through this patchwork of laws, knowing when governments are trying to stall or hide information, knowing when to push back, how to push back, what's available.

– Danielle McLean

Staff Reporter at the Chronicle of Higher Education and Chair of the Freedom of Information Committee for the Society of Professional Journalists

LEGAL DEFENSE AND FOIA HOTLINE

Your philanthropy powers our Legal Defense and FOIA Hotline, which is available to working journalists and media lawyers seven days per week.

We create special event hotlines for reporters covering major events such as elections, protests, presidential inaugurations, Olympics, and political party conventions.

The 587 hotline inquiries we responded to from January 2018 to June 2019 included questions related to Freedom of Information Act requests, libel and privacy concerns, general newsgathering activities, and issues arising from political events and protest coverage, such as the detention and arrest of journalists.

CONFERENCES AND TRAININGS

Your support also helps us partner with various media organizations to share our services with even more people.

As a part of this work, we sent Reporters Committee staff to more conferences and trainings than ever before – 78 events over the past year and a half.

In total, we trained more than 3,500 journalists, lawyers, and students on their First Amendment rights in the past 18 months.



TOGETHER,

WE EXPAND THE CAPACITY OF PRO BONO LEGAL SUPPORT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

In collaboration with Yale Law School's Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic, the Reporters Committee launched the Free Expression Legal Network, a nationwide network of First Amendment law school clinics that identifies and helps to meet the legal needs of journalists across the country.

The launch of this network was made possible through a special gift from the Lodestar Foundation.

Through our coordination of this network, we are expanding the availability and capacity of pro bono legal support and providing law students with hands-on client representation experience.

With your help, we have significantly expanded our work with legal clinics. As part of this expansion, we have helped to relaunch the University of Virginia School of Law First Amendment Clinic. Reporters Committee attorneys are teaching the clinic and supervising students as they work on cases.

TOGETHER,

WE SUPPORT REPORTERS THROUGH PRE-PUBLICATION REVIEW.

Journalists often find themselves in need of legal assistance before they publish investigative stories.

Help from a lawyer at this stage empowers journalists to understand the legal implications and threats they could potentially face upon publication.

This service is particularly important to freelancers, independent journalists, and documentary filmmakers.

Without access to the pre-publication vetting assistance that your support provides, these journalists are on their own. Fear of costly

legal battles has a noticeable impact on our access to news, as journalists are pressured to leave some stones unturned.

Reporters Committee attorneys provide pre-publication legal services through key partnerships with Freelance Investigative Reporters and Editors, the International Documentary Association, and the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

In the past year and a half, our lawyers have provided pre-publication vetting assistance on 13 investigative journalism projects, including articles, radio news stories, and documentary films.

TOGETHER,

WE DEFEND AND STRENGTHEN NEWSGATHERING THROUGH POLICY.

The Reporters Committee advances journalism's mission to keep the public informed by working to make state, city, and federal government more transparent and accountable.

Our team strengthens federal reporter-source protections, promotes government transparency, identifies model open records provisions, and ensures the Justice Department follows strict standards for seeking journalists' records in its investigations. We protect the Freedom of Information Act from threats. We coordinate a coalition of journalism organizations actively working on these issues.

We are also committed to protecting journalists from strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPPs, which are used to intimidate reporters and silence critical coverage. We provide state-specific resources on the 30 states and the District of Columbia that have passed "anti-SLAPP" laws. We encourage lawmakers everywhere to support protections from SLAPP suits.

In 2018, we launched the **Technology and Press Freedom Project**, an initiative that pursues an integrated advocacy approach to address emerging issues at the intersection of technology and press freedom.

In recent years, there has been a disturbing rise in government prosecutions of individuals who leak classified information to the press. The Reporters Committee maintains a comprehensive list of cases involving a formal federal investigation into the leak of government information or a federal effort to force reporters to disclose confidential sources.

The Reporters Committee continues to be on the front line defending newsgathering from overly aggressive leak investigations and prosecutions.

Also, in 2019 – without any meaningful debate – the CIA pushed for an expansion of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act. The expanded provision could indefinitely criminalize reporting on the identity of individuals with a classified relationship to intelligence agencies. As we go to press on this report, the Reporters Committee is actively working to block the expansion or mitigate its harms in future legislation.

As a policy analyst for the Reporters Committee, Melissa monitors and researches legislation, drafts letters and testimony for public hearings, and conducts research on press freedom and government transparency issues. She also facilitates meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill to advance press freedom, attends congressional hearings, and summarizes our policy work through blog posts and briefing materials.



“My work involves working collaboratively within multiple departments at the Reporters Committee along with members of other press freedom and government transparency organizations.

Working with our coalition partners helps to strengthen our policy initiatives, along with strengthening our partnerships with other organizations. Being able to advance our policy goals helps the Reporters Committee maintain its status as a leader in the fight for press freedom.

– Melissa Wasser, Policy Analyst

PARTNERSHIPS

The Reporters Committee works closely with coalitions and organizations to provide legal support and protect our free press.

Your donations allow us to act as the hub of a nationwide effort to support press freedom. Our partners include:

FACT-CHECKERS LEGAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Reporters Committee attorneys are developing and coordinating a legal guide specifically for fact-checkers in the U.S.

FIRST LOOK MEDIA'S PRESS FREEDOM DEFENSE FUND

Since 2017, Reporters Committee attorneys have reviewed and evaluated applications from journalists in U.S.-based litigation or potential litigation for the fund.

FREE EXPRESSION LEGAL NETWORK

The Reporters Committee helps coordinate a nationwide network of law school clinics, academics, and others focused on promoting and protecting a free press.

FREELANCE INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS AND EDITORS

Our attorneys provide pro bono pre-publication assistance to freelance journalists through FIRE's Virtual Newsroom program.

FUND FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Reporters Committee attorneys provide pro bono pre-publication assistance to journalists who receive grants from the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION

The Reporters Committee is the U.S. representative to the Inter American Press Association.

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Reporters Committee attorneys, along with the Documentary Film Legal Clinic at the UCLA School of Law, provide pro bono pre-publication assistance for documentary films supported by IDA's Enterprise Documentary Fund.

RED PRESS INITIATIVE

The Reporters Committee is a project partner and advisory committee member for the Red Press Initiative, led by the Native American Journalists Association.

THE U.S. PRESS FREEDOM COALITION

The Reporters Committee co-leads a coalition of press freedom groups in developing a public engagement campaign about the critical role of a free press and access to information.

U.S. PRESS FREEDOM TRACKER

The Reporters Committee is a steering committee member for the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker.

In addition, our work is made possible with the help of our legal partners. With their support as local counsel, amicus partners, and guide authors, we are able to provide invaluable legal support to journalists in communities across the U.S.



Sarah litigates cases, drafts friend-of-the-court briefs, provides pre-publication assistance to journalists, and oversees the publication of the Reporters Committee's legal guides.

She also helps supervise the Reporters Committee's hotline for journalists, and serves on the advisory committees of the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker and the Red Press Initiative. In addition, she teaches media law at American University's School of Communication.

"My work involves supporting partnerships between the Reporters Committee and others. Working with these organizations and people has allowed us to expand our impact far beyond what we could achieve alone."

— Sarah Matthews, Staff Attorney

2018–2019 NOTABLE MOMENTS

RESEARCHING AND CELEBRATING PRESS FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAS

In February 2018, we hosted the first delegation of international journalists from the Inter American Press Association – of which the Reporters Committee is a member – to assess the state of press freedoms in the U.S.



RCFP's Bruce Brown with Maria Elvira Dominguez, president of the Inter American Press Association and publisher of Colombian newspaper El País, and Roberto Pombo, president of the Chapultepec Committee of the IAPA and publisher of the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo

We facilitated meetings with IAPA delegates and members of the U.S. Congress, current and former executive branch officials, a federal judge, and several journalists. IAPA participants also offered their perspectives on the dangers of anti-press rhetoric and government retaliation based on their experiences with press censorship in Latin America.

We later published a report outlining key findings and insights from this visit.

On March 30, 2019, the Inter American Press Association presented the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press with its 2019 Chapultepec Grand Prize at its mid-year meeting in Cartagena, Colombia.

The Chapultepec Grand Prize is given annually to individuals or organizations for their defense and promotion of freedom of expression and of the press.

AN EVENING WITH DAVID MCCRAW AND JANE MAYER

The New York Times Deputy General Counsel and author David McCraw discussed his new book, "Truth in Our Times: Inside the Fight for Press Freedom in the Age of Alternative Facts," in a conversation with The New Yorker's Jane Mayer, a member of our steering committee, on March 21, 2019, in Washington, D.C.

Nearly 70 journalists, lawyers, and First Amendment supporters gathered at the Reporters Committee headquarters to hear McCraw recount his experiences as a newsroom lawyer for The New York Times.



2018 AWARDS DINNER

The annual Freedom of the Press Awards Dinner is one of the highlights of our year, where donors, friends, honorees, and partners join us to celebrate the free press.

2018 *Freedom of the Press* AWARDS DINNER

Our 2018 Honorees:

Dean Baquet, *The New York Times*

Robert Siegel, *NPR*

Lynn Novick, *Florentine Films*

Nabiha Syed, *BuzzFeed News*,
Inaugural Rising Star Award

The 2018 Freedom of the Press Awards Dinner was held on May 22 at the Pierre Hotel in New York. David Muir, anchor and managing editor of ABC World News Tonight, emceed the evening.

"We're here to recognize the hard work, the dedication to tell the story," Muir said.

"Ensuring journalists can do their jobs to inform the public free from interference from the government – it's at the core of our democracy. The free press transcends partisan politics. It's a value that no matter who is in office, we fight vigorously to defend."



Honoree Dean Baquet



Bibliocrunch's Miral Sattar, Rising Star Honoree Nabiha Syed, and BuzzFeed News' Maggie Schultz

REPORTERS COMMITTEE FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

2019 AWARDS DINNER

We held our 2019 Freedom of the Press Awards Dinner on May 8 at the Ziegfeld Ballroom in New York. Lester Holt, anchor of “NBC Nightly News” and “Dateline NBC,” emceed our celebration.



Honoree April Ryan, RCFP Steering Committee member Wolf Blitzer, and CNN’s Brooke Baldwin

2019 Freedom of the Press AWARDS DINNER

Our 2019 Honorees:

David G. Bradley, *Atlantic Media*

John Carreyrou, *The Wall Street Journal* and Author of “Bad Blood”

Andrea Mitchell, *MSNBC*

April Ryan, *American Urban Radio Networks* and *CNN* contributor

City Bureau Founders Harry Backlund, Bettina Chang, Andrea Hart, and Darryl Holliday
Rising Star Award



Honorees and City Bureau Founders Andrea Hart, Harry Backlund, Darryl Holliday, and Bettina Chang

“This partnership has been immensely helpful. It’s also been really inspiring.

As a direct result of the Committee’s support of City Bureau, hundreds of people in Chicago have a working knowledge of the fair report privilege and the Illinois Open Meetings Act, and they are using it. To those of you who are here tonight in tribute to the Reporters Committee, know that this is another kind of impact that your support makes possible.

– Harry Backlund, co-founder of City Bureau

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The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press would like to thank the following organizations and individuals who supported our work between Jan. 1, 2018 and July 1, 2019.

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FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES, ACCRUAL BASIS



Legal Defense and Research
\$1,951,363

Fundraising
\$509,360

Management and General
\$553,560

REVENUE



Contributions and Grants
\$3,096,756

Program Services
\$62,156

Fundraising Events
\$801,605

Interest and Dividends
\$226,149

ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND FUND BALANCES, ACCRUAL BASIS

Current Assets

Cash and equivalents	\$ 810,077
Contributions receivable	\$ 1,188,391
Prepaid expenses	\$ 61,173
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 2,059,641

Other Assets

Investments	\$11,587,832
Property and equipment, net	\$ 659,787
Security deposits	\$ 36,595
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	\$12,284,214
TOTAL	\$14,343,855

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$ 21,986
Accrued payroll	\$ 14,238
Deferred rent, current portion	\$ 41,509
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$ 77,733

Other Liabilities

Deferred rent	\$ 646,765
TOTAL	\$ 724,498

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions

Undesignated	\$ 7,254,726
Board designated long term capital requirements	\$ 834,788

TOTAL NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS \$ 8,089,514

With donor restrictions \$ 5,529,843

TOTAL \$13,619,357

Since our founding, the Reporters Committee has provided pro bono legal services and a wealth of free legal information to journalists and newsgatherers. 2018 was no exception. In fact, we expanded our reach, providing more services in 2018 than ever before. Our success is supported by our passionate and generous donors who believe, like we do, that a free press is essential to our democracy.

Because of you, the Reporters Committee remains on strong financial footing with \$13.6 million in net assets at the close of fiscal year 2018. The transition from cash to accrual accounting means our investments now reflect fair market value. These investments perfectly position us for the regional expansion that will be a major focus of our efforts in the coming years.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Copies of current financial statements are available on our website at <https://www.rcfp.org/annual-report/>. You can also receive them upon request by contacting the Reporters Committee at 1156 15th St. NW, Suite 1020, Washington D.C. 20005 or by telephone at 202-795-9300.



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2017-2018

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Yelp Policy Fellow
2018-2019

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INTERNS

Special thank you to the interns who work with Reports Committee staff and attorneys throughout the year.

Thank you in particular to former Communications Intern Katie Beth Nichols, who took several photos featured in this report.

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THEY HAVE TO FIGHT TO MAKE IT TO THE FRONT PAGE.
WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

**REPORTERS
COMMITTEE**
FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

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