

FIGHTING SECRECY AND STANDING UP FOR LOCAL JOURNALISTS

Across the nation, journalists face a growing culture of secrecy in state and local government and increasing mistrust, spelling trouble for our First Amendment freedoms and our democracy.

Legal support is essential infrastructure to newsrooms and a key step in the path to reinvigorating local news. Through our **Local Legal Initiative** and **ProJourn** programs, both generously funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Reporters Committee focuses on making sure that newsrooms can get free legal help while they pursue the stories that matter most in their communities. **Collectively, our attorneys are helping brave editors and reporters chip away at the culture of secrecy.**



- In **COLORADO**, our Local Legal Initiative attorney helped the editor of the Crested Butte News appeal a district court decision holding that the names of people who seek to ban books from a library could be withheld from the public.
- Our **OKLAHOMA** attorney sued to obtain records about applications for federal COVID relief funds. Using records obtained in litigation, the nonprofit news outlet Oklahoma Watch revealed which agencies, businesses, and nonprofits sought and secured billions of dollars in aid.
- Our **PENNSYLVANIA** attorney helped Spotlight PA obtain more than a million records from the state Department of Health for a data-driven investigation into the state's medical marijuana certification program.
- In **OREGON**, our attorney helped The Oregonian obtain records about how much water Google uses to cool its data centers. As a result, Google announced that it would no longer hide its water-use numbers as a trade secret anywhere in the country.
- Our **TENNESSEE** attorney helped the Associated Press access graphic videos showing prison staff physically restraining and forcibly medicating a mentally ill death-row inmate.



To expand our capacity to provide free legal support for journalists and other newsgatherers, the Reporters Committee is building out ProJourn, an innovative program piloted by our partners Microsoft and Davis Wright Tremaine.

In 2022, ProJourn, a network of pro bono law firm attorneys and corporate counsel, expanded from California and Washington state to Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, and New York. This program to connect local media with free local counsel is already having a profound impact.

With the help of ProJourn lawyers, Open Vallejo published a major investigation uncovering how senior city officials intentionally destroyed evidence related to six police shootings in Vallejo, California.

ProJourn also secured pro bono counsel for Investigate Midwest's report on a congressional investigation into working conditions at meatpacking plants during the pandemic that led to hundreds of worker deaths.

The Reporters Committee's local strategies make it possible to meet newsrooms where they are and provide the legal support they need. And with vital support from our individual and institutional donors, we can do it all at no cost to the journalists we serve.

The Reporter Committee's fight to protect the First Amendment rights of newsgatherers is growing at the local level. But at the national level, as we have for decades, we continue to make arguments in federal courts to preserve press freedom for generations to come.

PROTECTING JOURNALISTS

In October, following years of advocacy by the Reporters Committee and newsroom leaders, the U.S. Department of Justice announced historic changes to its news media guidelines that strengthen protections for journalists.

The updated guidelines prohibit members of the Justice Department from using subpoenas or other investigative tools against journalists who possess and publish classified information obtained in newsgathering, with only narrow exceptions. They also bar efforts to seize records from, or of, journalists engaged in newsgathering more broadly.



RCFP Executive Director Bruce D. Brown speaks after joining other news media representatives for a meeting with Attorney General Merrick Garland at the Department of Justice, June 14, 2021. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

We continue to protect journalists from law enforcement attacks on the free press. In November, we settled one of our longest-running lawsuits — a Freedom of Information Act case concerning the FBI's impersonation of an Associated Press editor in 2007.

Through years of litigation, we pried loose records showing that the FBI failed to follow its own rules governing undercover operations involving impersonation of the news media.

Our lawsuit resulted in an important FOIA ruling that sets a high bar for the government to withhold records in this way again.



(Photo/Wayne Hsieh)

TECHNOLOGY AND PRESS FREEDOM

Through our Technology and Press Freedom Project, we are tackling some of the most challenging questions surrounding online speech and the threats of government interference that imperil all news media.

In Texas and Florida, social media censorship challenges are working their way through the courts and could potentially have huge implications for the news media.

In friend-of-the-court briefs, the Reporters Committee is highlighting the threat to precedent central to the independence of the press if states try to censor or moderate content on social media platforms.



In 2021, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a law that prohibits social media companies from "willfully deplatforming" Floridian political candidates by suspending or barring them. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

The Reporters Committee honored leaders in journalism and law at the 2022 Freedom of the Press Awards in New York. The event raised more than \$1.7 million to support and defend the free press for years to come.



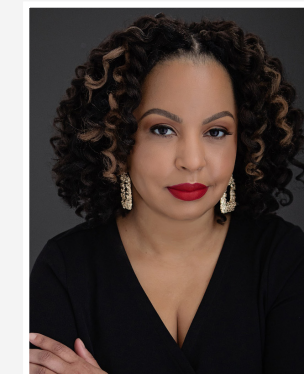
(Photos/Rob Rich)



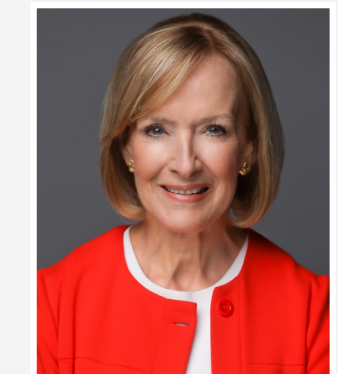
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Williams & Connolly LLP
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AZMAT KHAN
Investigative Reporter
The New York Times and
The New York Times Magazine
Catalyst Award



WENDI C. THOMAS
Founding Editor and Publisher
MLK50: Justice Through Journalism
Local Champion Award



JUDY WOODRUFF
Anchor and Managing Editor
PBS NewsHour
Career Achievement Award



SAHAN JOURNAL
led by Founding Publisher
and CEO
Mukhtar M. Ibrahim
Rising Star Award

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The support of foundations, corporations, and nonprofit partners is critical for the Reporters Committee's continued impact. We are grateful to organizational supporters that contributed \$1,000 or more in 2022, listed below.

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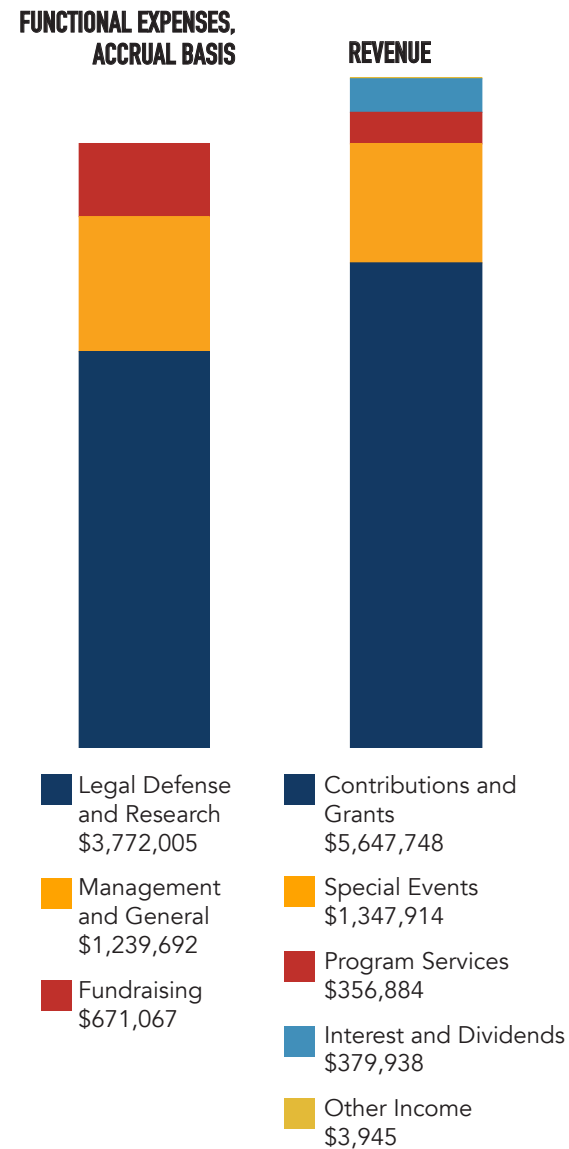
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The following information is from the Reporters Committee's Audited Financial Statement for the fiscal year spanning Jan. 1, 2022, through Dec. 31, 2022. Our operating budget for 2022 was \$6,356,407.



ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND FUND BALANCES, ACCRUAL BASIS

Current Assets	
Cash and equivalents	\$ 2,084,774
Contributions and grants receivable	\$ 1,459,908
Prepaid expenses	\$ 72,004
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 3,616,686

Other Assets	
Grants and contributions receivable-long term, net of discount	\$ 1,038,592
Investments	\$13,503,331
Property and equipment, net	\$ 397,091
Operating lease right-of-use assets, net	\$ 2,209,272
Security deposits	\$ 36,595
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	\$17,184,881
TOTAL	\$20,801,567

LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable	\$ 39,559
Accrued expenses	\$ 179,876
Deferred revenue	-
Deferred rent, current portion	-
Operating lease liability, current portion	\$ 310,066
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$ 529,501

Other Liabilities	
Deferred rent, net of current portion	-
Operating lease liability, net of current position	\$ 2,481,277
TOTAL	\$ 3,010,778

NET ASSETS	
Without Donor Restrictions	
Undesignated	\$ 7,940,437
Board designated long term capital requirements	\$ 1,096,518
TOTAL NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	\$ 9,036,955
With donor restrictions	\$ 7,604,914
TOTAL	\$16,641,869

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SCAN TO MAKE A DONATION

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press provides pro bono legal representation, amicus curiae support, and other legal resources to protect First Amendment freedoms and the newsgathering rights of journalists.

Donations to the Reporters Committee help to protect the right to gather and distribute news; to keep government accountable by ensuring access to public records, meetings, and courtrooms; and to preserve free speech and a free press, as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

DONATE EASILY AND SECURELY AT [RCFP.ORG/DONATE](https://www.rcfp.org/donate) OR BY SCANNING THE QR CODE AT LEFT.

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1156 15th Street NW, Suite 1020
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2022 BY THE NUMBERS

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

24,000+

Obtained more than 24,000 pages of public records

360+

Unsealed more than 360 pages of court records

500+

Resolved more than 500 calls to our free Legal Hotline

40

Filed 40 new lawsuits, representing more than two dozen journalists and news organizations

40+

Submitted more than 40 friend-of-the-court briefs, several joined by more than 30 news organizations

20+

Vetted more than 20 investigative articles, podcast episodes, and documentary films

200+

Quoted or mentioned in more than 200 news stories

12+

Published more than a dozen guest essays and op-eds

1,900+

Trained more than 1,900 journalists, media lawyers, students, and members of the general public