



Report to Stakeholders

January–April, 2015



The latest in a series of periodic reports to our stakeholders about progress at ProPublica. Earlier reports, including [our annual report for 2014](#), are available at [ProPublica.org](#).

Breadth, in Depth

Awards are not the most important thing to ProPublica; winning them is not why we're in business. (We're in business, if you didn't already know, to publish investigative stories that have real-world impact.) But journalism awards can be indicative of some things, including the respect peers have for particular work.

A list of awards ProPublica won in the first four months of this year appears at pages 8–10 of this report. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the list is that ProPublica was honored for 18 different stories, series or news applications. Particularly for a news organization with just 45 journalists, that is a record of which we're very proud.



Halliburton whistleblower Tony Menendez

ProPublica has been known since its beginnings for in-depth reporting. Our reporters, editors and developers often spend months on a single story or news app. But especially since an expansion of our staff in 2014, the breadth of this deep coverage has increased substantially. The coverage that garnered recognition in the early months of this year ranged from our innovative news app, “[Losing Ground](#),” on environmental damage in Louisiana to our “[Segregation Now](#)” project on the re-segregation of schools from Tuscaloosa, Alabama to Ferguson, Missouri; from the shortcomings of tire giant [Firestone in Liberia](#) to those of the American [Red Cross](#) in Superstorm Sandy.

In 2015, we have already published, or begun publishing, in-depth reporting on the inequities of our nation’s [workers’ compensation](#) system, how a [Texas super PAC](#) fell apart as consultants bickered, the rape spree of

Front Cover: Paralyzed in a warehouse accident, Joel Ramirez has battled California’s workers’ comp system.

former NFL star [Darren Sharper](#) and what it reveals about endemic issues in rape investigations nationwide, [Chris Christie's fiscal record](#) in New Jersey, a television news show's [broadcast of a patient's death](#) without his or his family's permission, problems at a [group home](#) for youth in California, dangers from police use of "[flashbang](#)" grenades, and the saga of a [Halliburton whistleblower](#). There will be much more to come.



This range of important investigative stories is greatly aided by our publishing partnerships. We're proud of those partnerships; a list of the 16 partners with whom we've worked so far this year can be found on page 11. And one important consequence of the greater number of stories we've been able to produce is the growth of our publishing platform, with page views of

ProPublica content on our own site having grown 56% in the first four months of this year, on top of a 10% increase the previous year. That growth creates a "virtuous circle," in which greater reach makes it more likely to achieve our mission of having impact, spurring change through journalistic means, while the impact of our work tends to make ProPublica more widely known, and thus more likely to have further impact in the future.

Impact

The most important test of ProPublica is whether our work is having impact. By this, we mean not audience size or prizes, but real-world change. Examples of what we mean can be found at <http://www.propublica.org/about/impact/>, as can a white paper on how ProPublica thinks about impact and related questions.

In the first period of 2015, ProPublica stories produced such change in a number of important areas:

- In response to our reporting on inequities in state workers compensation programs, California labor officials in March formally advised insurance companies that a 2012 state law could not be used to reopen old cases and deny previously approved care. In April, proposed legislation modifying the 2012 law passed a key state Senate committee.
- Our reporting on the apparent overuse of restraints of children in schools is beginning to show important results. In Virginia, the Legislature in February passed a bill requiring state leaders to set limits on the practice. In Washington State, a bill limiting restraints was enacted in April. One state representative wrote to thank ProPublica for, “great work on ending use of isolation and restraint of special ed students.”
- After we revealed the presence of “zombie cookies” on some websites that could not be deleted by users, tech company Turn said it would discontinue the practice, and Verizon said it would begin enabling consumers to opt out of such tracking.
- Local reporting by the Connecticut Health Investigative Team (C-HIT) based on ProPublica’s Prescriber Checkup news application led to one high-prescribing nurse’s surrendering her state and federal registrations as the state health department further investigates her practices.

What People are Saying

“In a very short span of time, ProPublica has become one of the essential places to go when you’re trying to find out what’s really going on in this country.”

—**Charles Pierce**

Esquire

March 5

“[W]e aspire to write great stories. If you want an example, check out one of the latest efforts from ProPublica, an independent, non-profit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest. Headquartered in Manhattan, it has been producing award-winning projects since 2008. I have no doubt ‘The Demolition of Workers’ Comp’ will add to a list that already includes the Pulitzer Prize multiple times ... This is the kind of story that can force change. This is what an investigative reporter dreams about: helping people and righting wrongs.”

—**Kevin Allenspach**

St. Cloud Times [MN]

March 11

“ProPublica’s investigation of segregation [was] perhaps the deepest dig into this issue ever mounted by a media organization.”

—**David Callahan**

Inside Philanthropy

January 9

“ProPublica has been doing some top notch work investigating the ongoing scandals plaguing New York Governor [Andrew] Cuomo.”

—**HotAir**

March 11

What People are Saying

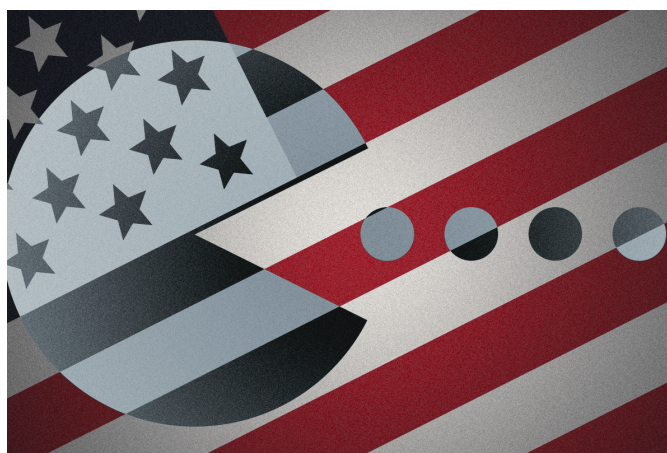
“With their ongoing investigative project on the ‘demolition’ of workers compensation, ‘Insult to Injury,’ ProPublica’s Michael Grabell and NPR’s Howard Berkes are modern muckrakers of sorts. Grabell and Berkes reveal one unsavory detail after another in a powerful package of stories, interactives and photos ... It’s just the sort of evidence Americans need to understand why safety net programs established to help injured and disabled workers and sustain them in retirement—programs now under assault—are crucial.”

—**Trudy Lieberman**

Columbia Journalism Review

March 12

“I feel hugely optimistic about ... the use of data journalism. We have to think about how does the form change. There are journalistic services we can provide if you think about the technology and services in different ways. An article with nice charts is a nice thing to do, but it can be more than that.’ Gingras [c]ites



an example from ProPublica, an investigation into the state of dialysis centers. The investigation led ProPublica to launch a website on dialysis featuring an ongoing knowledge utility with ongoing, evergreen, persistent value to the audience. That product is in and of itself sustainable.”

—**Richard Gingras**

Head of News & Social Products, Google

Interview as reported by NYC Media Lab

April 2

What People are Saying

“I think investigative work is interesting right now. In the past, an investigative journalist would try to work on a story for a year and would eventually come out of his cave and say, Here is the story. But I think a lot more is being done collaboratively and out in the open to some extent. I think it’s a real interesting time for investigative work, especially with the data out there for people to parse, and people getting access to data and seeing what comes up. Places like ProPublica, that’s what they do.”

—**Marc Glaser of PBS MediaShift**

Future of News newsletter
March

“Relying primarily on philanthropy, ProPublica, an investigative-news group, employs around forty journalists. Where national news has cut back, this Pulitzer Prize-winning outlet has turned out investigations on stories about subjects ranging from surveillance to drones ProPublica’s mission is to wade into the muck, and it does so with efficiency. It says 85 cents out of every \$1 is spent on news, as opposed to 15 cents at traditional newspapers.”

—**Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr.**

“Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy”
The New Press
April

Honors

ProPublica was the first online news organization to win a Pulitzer Prize (2010) and the first to win a Pulitzer for stories not published in print (2011). Much of our best work from last year has been honored in various venues this Spring.

- Our article “**Segregation Now**,” on the re-segregation of American secondary education, published in partnership with the Atlantic, received the Hechinger Grand Prize for Distinguished Education Reporting, the highest honor in education journalism, after earlier receiving the National Award for Education Reporting for beat reporting. This work was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for Public Interest and is a finalist for an American Bar Association Silver Gavel Award and for Deadline Club Awards for public service, beat reporting and enterprise reporting. The coverage also won the Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi Award for public service for online journalism, a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for features, honorable mention for the John Bartlow Martin Award for Public Interest Magazine Journalism, and third place in the National Headliner Award for writing for a website. Nikole Hannah-Jones, the reporter on this project, was named the National Association of Black Journalists Journalist of the Year.
- Our reporting with the Lens on the rapid loss of land on the Louisiana coast, “**Losing Ground**,” won a gold medal from the Society for News Design, a silver medal in the environment category at the Malofiej International Infographics Awards, the Investigative Reporters and Editors Gannett Award for Innovation in Watchdog Journalism, first place in the National Headliner Award for writing for a website, and an Edward R. Murrow Regional Award. This project also is a finalist for a medal for information graphics from the Society of Publication Designers, received three Awards of Excellence from the Society for News Design for features, infographics and multimedia, and was named a finalist for the Scripps Howard National Journalism Award for environmental reporting, the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for a multiplatform project by a large organization, and the Deadline Club Award for multimedia.
- Work on **Firestone’s activities in Liberia** at the time of Charles Taylor, in partnership with Frontline, received the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for a multiplatform project by a large organization and the James Aronson Award for Social Justice Journalism, and was a runner-up for the Overseas Press Club Edward R. Murrow Award for documentary.

- Our coverage, with NPR News, of the **Red Cross** and its mishandling of Superstorm Sandy was a finalist for the Goldsmith Prize for investigative reporting and won the Society of Silurians Excellence in Journalism Award for public service.
- Articles on failure in the U.S. government’s program to identify and repatriate the **Missing in Action**, reported with NPR News, received the Alliance for Women in Media “Gracie” Award for outstanding investigative program or feature, and a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for features, while reporter Megan McCloskey was named a finalist for the Livingston Awards for Young Journalists.
- Our **Treatment Tracker** news application on payments under Medicare Part B won a Society for News Design silver medal and was a finalist for the Anthony Shadid Award for Journalism Ethics.
- The news application **China’s Great Firewall** won a bronze medal for world and national journalism at the Malofiej International Infographics Awards and three Awards of Excellence from the Society for News Design for features, infographics and continuous use.
- Reporting on the excessive use of **restraints in schools** received the National Award for Education Reporting for single-topic news or feature.
- Articles on the financial risks to states and local governments from the structure of **tobacco bonds** won the Society of Silurians Excellence in Journalism Award for online investigative reporting and the New York State Society of CPAs Excellence in Financial Journalism Award for explanatory reporting, while a related news app received a bronze medal from the Malofiej International Infographics Awards.
- Jesse Eisinger’s column, **The Trade**, won a Society of American Business Editors and Writers Best in Business Award for digital commentary.
- A series of stories about abuses of the **wage garnishment** system, reported in partnership with NPR, was a finalist for the Scripps Howard National Journalism Award for business and economics reporting and the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Best in Business Award for digital investigative reporting, and is a finalist for the Deadline Club Award for business investigative reporting.
- Stories on **gun violence** in our cities and post-traumatic stress disorder, one published in partnership with Essence, are finalists for two Deadline Club Awards, for public service and minority focus, while a related infographic received a Society for News Design Awards of Excellence.

- Reporting on tapes from Inside the **New York Federal Reserve** Bank in partnership with This American Life was a finalist for the Scripps Howard National Journalism Award for in-depth radio reporting.
- Coverage of **energy** by reporter Abrahm Lustgarten was a finalist for the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Best in Business Award for environmental reporting.
- Our **news applications** also won a host of other awards, including Society for News Design Awards of Excellence for ProPublica’s organizational portfolio and the individual portfolios of developers Lena Groeger and Sisi Wei, an app comparing insurance plans under the Affordable Care Act, and an infographic tracking extinctions.
- Reporting on the plight of **temporary workers** won second place in the Philip Meyer Award for journalism using social science research.
- An article on **cancer treatments** received a third place designation for business coverage from the Association of Health Care Journalists Awards for Excellence in Health Care Coverage.

Publishing Partners, January–April 2015

Advocate [Baton Rouge, LA]*	Houston Chronicle*
Albany Times-Union	Marketplace
Atlantic	New York Times
California Sunday Magazine*	NPR News
Daily Beast	Politico
Data Journalism China*	Sports Illustrated
Frontline	USA Today
Gawker*	Washington Post

**new partner*

By the Numbers

Average monthly page views at ProPublica.org:

2,130,000, up 56% year-over-year

Average monthly unique visitors to ProPublica.org:

992,000 average per month, up 82% year-over-year

Twitter followers: more than 376,000, up 12% since January 1

Facebook fans: more than 99,000, up 6% since January 1

Daily email subscribers: over 74,000, up 2% since January 1

Donors: 600+

Image Credits

Front Cover: Paralyzed in a warehouse accident, Joel Ramirez has battled California's workers' comp system. *Patrick Fallon for ProPublica*; **Page 2:** Halliburton whistleblower Tony Menendez, *Tim Galloway for ProPublica*; **Page 3:** Flashbangs illustration, *Justin Volz for ProPublica*; **Page 6:** Texas super PAC illustration, *David Sleight/ProPublica*.