

# Readers Power ProPublica

2016 ANNUAL REPORT





*The ProPublica staff awaits the 2016 Pulitzer Prize announcements. ProPublica was proud to receive its third Pulitzer Prize, this one jointly with The Marshall Project, for explanatory reporting, for our article “An Unbelievable Story of Rape.”  
(Edwin Torres for ProPublica)*

# Highlights of the Year at ProPublica

**Impact** Our journalism spurred a host of meaningful changes. Facebook halted an advertising practice that facilitated racial discrimination. Law enforcement officials stopped using a drug test that had led to wrongful convictions. Judges struck down a state worker compensation system as unconstitutional. A chain of retail stores that took advantage of service members shut its doors and was forced to repay millions of dollars in improper charges.





*Edwin Torres for ProPublica*

### **Important stories**

Memorable work ranged from the health impacts of Agent Orange exposure on the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans, to the shortcomings of algorithms used across the nation's criminal justice system, to Houston's vulnerability to a major natural disaster, to our launch of Electionland, a national reporting initiative that tracked voter experiences in real time, across thousands of polling sites.

### **Awards**

ProPublica was proud to receive its third Pulitzer Prize, this one jointly with The Marshall Project, for explanatory reporting, for our article "An Unbelievable Story of Rape." The same story won the George Polk Award for justice reporting. In addition, our series "Killing the Colorado" was a finalist for the Pulitzer for national reporting, Alec MacGillis' work was honored with the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting, and our series with NPR News on worker's compensation received the IRE Medal. A full list of awards can be found later in this report.



*Edwin Torres for ProPublica*

### Partnerships

We extended our list of publishing partners to 139 news organizations, with a total of 35 in 2016 alone. Our partners over the past year included the New York Times, Washington Post, NPR News, Frontline, This American Life, the New Yorker, and the Atlantic.

### Growing platform

Monthly average page views rose 12% to 2.6 million, while unique visitors climbed 15% to 1.1 million. Substantial growth came in ProPublica's Facebook fans, up 70% to more than 210,000, while Twitter followers rose 13% to more than 465,000.

### Regional initiative

We announced what we hope will be an important new thrust for ProPublica: regional reporting units, the first of which, ProPublica Illinois, will begin publishing in 2017.

### Business breakthrough

Gifts were up all year, but accelerated dramatically after the election. Total fundraising for the year came to \$17.2 million, increasing ProPublica's reserve fund to more than \$9 million, or almost seven months of projected 2017 spending. The number of total donors soared more than 600% to more than 26,000.

# Readers Power ProPublica

One key aspect of ProPublica’s business model is our funding, which comes almost entirely from philanthropy. Readers power our investigative journalism — not corporations, politicians or advocacy groups — and they donate because they believe our work can make a difference in our democracy and civic life. There is perhaps no greater indication of the strength of this relationship than the burst of contributions that followed the 2016 presidential election.

Hours after the results were clear, small donors across the country began clicking our on-line “donate” button. In the next few days, envelopes with checks began trickling into ProPublica’s office, from \$5 gifts to amounts in the hundreds and thousands. Many shared with us why they felt moved now to support ProPublica by taking action on its behalf.

“I’ve been a fan for a few years,” wrote DKW from Georgia. “The stories are always deep — sometimes longer than I think I have time for — but every time I read one I’m so grateful you’re doing the work you do in the way you do it. I should have given sooner, but the election has been a wake-up call that I need to help support organizations that research and

report, and organizations that I trust.”

“I donated a modest donation to your news organization because I believe that the news of the 21st century must be supported by average Americans,” wrote Dylan from Kentucky. “Today’s major news organizations are selling a product. With fewer and fewer individuals buying subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, the incentive to produce hard-hitting journalism becomes less intense.”

“I believe in investigative journalism and the Fourth Estate,” wrote Cindy from Wyoming. “But more importantly, I give today because I am horrified by the election and the threats Trump has made against journalism, journalists, freedom of speech and

freedom of the press. If my small donation can help be part of a larger sum that makes an important statement today, then please let it do so.”

The momentum of giving accelerated after HBO’s John Oliver mentioned ProPublica in his small list of organizations worthy of support in the coming years. By year-end, smaller gifts had come from more than 26,000 donors, and amounted to more than \$2.9 million dollars.

We understand the responsibility that comes with this generosity — one ProPublica will meet by expanding our staff and extending our ability to call out abuses and hold those in power to account through painstaking and fearless accountability journalism.





*In our most wide-ranging collaboration yet, ProPublica organized Electionland, a national reporting initiative that revealed voters' experiences in real time.*  
*(John Brecher for ProPublica)*

## Protecting the Vote

In 2016, we served our readers with abounding examples of this kind of work, particularly relating to the election — before, during and after.

In our most wide-ranging collaboration yet, ProPublica organized Electionland, a national reporting initiative that revealed voters' experiences in real time. Working with Google News Lab, Univision, WNYC, First Draft, the USA Today Network and the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism, we used cutting-edge technology, social media newsgathering and national data from a nonpartisan legal call center to find problems that would prevent citizens from

exercising their right to vote. We did this with a team of more than a thousand people, including about 600 journalism school students who pored through social media reports and upward of 400 local journalists across 50 states who signed up to receive and report on tips we received.

Electionland, which launched during the early voting period, gave us an unprecedented real-time understanding of voting in the United States. From problems with hours long lines in California to misinformation about voter ID requirements in Texas, the project allowed us to publish more than 400 stories while polls were still open and issues could be addressed. For example, when we spotted complaints from West

Palm Beach, Florida, about several dozen people shouting at early voters with bullhorns, we posted a story that prompted the local sheriff's office to intervene and stop the intimidating behavior.

Our team also looked closely at allegations of widespread voter fraud. Looking at thousands of jurisdictions and millions of voters, we were able to say conclusively that there was no evidence of either widespread fraud or voter intimidation. Instead we caught signs of people using social media to spread fabrications. When an image circulating on Twitter, captioned in both English and Spanish, claimed to show an immigration officer arresting a Latino man in line to vote, we quickly determined the image was a fake — a composite of two different photographs — and there were no reports of anyone arrested by ICE officials while voting.

“Most newsrooms in America are asking an important but premature question while polls are open: ‘Who’s winning?’” said Scott Klein, ProPublica deputy managing editor and the project’s leader, at the launch of the initiative. “Electionland is an experiment that asks whether we can help empower newsrooms to cover other vitally important questions that day: How is the election itself going? Who’s voting and who’s being turned away?”

## Giving Voice to a Forgotten Class

ProPublica’s coverage leading up to the election also proved trailblazing. This was clear when the

election returns rolled in on the evening of Nov. 8, and stunned newsrooms around the country regrouped and dispatched their reporters to the places where, it was now clear, Donald Trump had planted the seeds of his victory. Within days, reports sprang up on the new Trump voters, delineated from coal country and hollowed-out factory towns.

But ProPublica's Alec MacGillis didn't have to rush off. He'd been visiting the heartland throughout 2016, measuring the gathering wave of frustration and anger. In July, ProPublica and Politico published MacGillis' story on the Dayton, Ohio, area, where industrial decay had become fertile ground for the politics of Donald Trump. MacGillis pushed deep into the lives and fortunes of Dayton's people and their interlocking fates. The issues that resonated with Trump voters, MacGillis wrote, "had been building for decades in places like Dayton. For the most part, the political establishment ignored, dismissed or overlooked these forces, until suddenly they blew apart nearly everyone's blueprint for the presidential campaign."

MacGillis' story, "The Great Republican Crack-Up" was not only a model of on-the-ground reporting, insightful analysis and elegant writing. It was also a prescient piece of journalism in which the reporting captured the pulse of discontent in the Rust Belt and steered ProPublica readers ahead of the curve.

After the election, ProPublica began shedding light on the activities of then-President-elect Trump's transition team and incoming administration, notably with our feature "The Chosen."



*Alec MacGillis' "The Great Republican Crack-Up" was a prescient piece of journalism in which the reporting captured the pulse of discontent in the Rust Belt and steered ProPublica readers ahead of the curve. (Ty Wright for ProPublica)*

## Holding the Powerful to Account

Throughout 2016, ProPublica crafted important, innovatively presented stories that pursued our mission to expose abuses of power and betrayals of public trust — precisely the kind of work that both our established and new donors say they are counting on us to do. Our subjects included the dubious credentials handed out by [the nation's largest accreditor of for-profit schools](#) and the damaging outcomes for students; health impacts of [Agent Orange exposure](#) on the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans and the failures of the VA to respond effectively; the troubling [failure rates and racial disparities](#)

[in algorithms](#) used across the criminal justice system to predict a defendant's risk of committing a future crime; [police use of error-prone drug kits](#) used to convict thousands of people annually; [deceptive practices by New York City landlords](#) that wrongfully inflate rents; and Facebook's inadvertent facilitation of [civil-rights violations](#).

Marcy, a Michigan reader, explained her recent donation to ProPublica: "Now, more than ever, our democracy needs a strong, independent press. Thanks for the work you do." We remain determined to serve readers with more essential journalism at this critical moment for America.

# Impact

While we are proud of our growing audience and the recognition of our journalistic peers, the true measure of ProPublica's success is real world change. Examples of what we mean, and discussions of how we think about the subject of impact, can be found at <http://www.propublica.org/about/impact/>

■ Following ProPublica's reporting that students at for-profit schools accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) have the lowest graduation rates in the country and struggle to repay their student loans, the Education Department announced that it would terminate the agency. This unprecedented move stripped the powers of one of the nation's largest accreditors of for-profit schools. It came after 12 state attorneys general, a coalition of 23 student and consumer protection organizations, an Education Department advisory committee and a report by officials at the Education Department — all citing ProPublica — recommended that the government de-authorize ACICS.

■ When ProPublica reported that Facebook allowed advertisers to buy credit, housing and employment ads that exclude anyone with an "affinity" for African-American, Asian-American and Hispanic people from seeing them, it sparked a wave of criticism aimed at the social network. Four members of Congress wrote Facebook demanding that the company stop letting advertisers exclude viewers of housing ads by race. The federal agency that enforces the nation's fair housing laws began talks with Facebook to address what experts said was a clear violation of federal anti-discrimination laws. Two weeks after our story ran, Facebook announced that it would bar advertisers from excluding users by race in ads that involved housing, credit and employment. The com-

pany said it would build an automated system to spot ads that discriminate illegally.

■ Our series of articles published with the New York Daily News, which detailed "nuisance abatement actions" — New York Police Department lawsuits that give police the power to evict people purportedly using their homes or business for illegal purposes — led to important results. After the investigation was published in February, the NYPD imposed new safeguards in the process of locking residents out of their homes before they've had a chance to tell their side of the story in court. The number of nuisance abatement actions filed by the NYPD dropped significantly. Several City Council members introduced a package of 13 bills that would reform the way the NYPD carries out nuisance abatement actions. The department has expressed support for some of these, including measures to remove marijuana possession as a charge that could lead to immediate eviction, to require lab reports to support drug allegations, and to limit exclusions of most people from homes to one year. In addition, one family that was wrongfully kicked out of their apartment, citing our reporting, filed a lawsuit seeking to have the law declared unconstitutional.

■ A ProPublica investigation, published in July with the New York Times Magazine, spotlighted how police departments across the country use roadside drug tests to secure guilty pleas and send tens of thousands





*Our reporting on faulty roadside drug tests spurred the district attorney's office in Portland, Oregon, to vacate wrongful convictions. (Todd Heisler, The New York Times)*

of people to jail every year — despite widespread evidence that they routinely produce false positives. Our reporting spurred the district attorney's office in Portland, Oregon, to review its drug possession cases. The office discovered five cases where defendants had pled guilty — but subsequent lab tests came back negative for the presence of any controlled substances — and vacated those five wrongful convictions. Portland's district attorney's office also changed the way it secured guilty pleas in drug possession cases based on these tests. Now such pleas will not be allowed unless the preliminary police roadside test is confirmed by lab analysis. In Texas, a state commission recommended that crime labs review all field test results and re-test substances collected in previous drug cases that had not been confirmed by lab testing. In Las Vegas, the Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice set up a committee looking for ways to challenge law enforcement's methods for getting drug convictions.

■ ProPublica and NPR reporting spotlighted Oklahoma's workers' compensation system, which allowed companies to "opt out" of state workers' comp and write their own plans for dealing with injured workers. In September, the Oklahoma Supreme Court struck down the opt-out system as unconstitutional, echoing an earlier ruling from the Oklahoma Workers'

Compensation Commission. The Florida Supreme Court struck down laws that capped attorney fees and limited workers to two years of temporary disability pay regardless of whether they were able to return to work. In October, the U.S. Labor Department released a report detailing how states are failing injured workers — an effort prompted by ten members of Congress who urged the U.S. labor secretary to devise an oversight plan for state workers' comp programs, citing ProPublica's reporting. The report lays the groundwork for new federal oversight, as Sen. Sherrod Brown announced he was drafting legislation to address its findings and hoped to advance it in the next Congress.

■ ProPublica, in partnership with the Texas Tribune, launched a multimedia project showing that Houston is at risk of a major disaster: a hurricane with the potential to devastate the region. In December, President Obama signed into law a bill to expedite a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study that will determine how best to protect Houston from such a hurricane. Called the "Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation," or WIIN, Act, the law included a bill that U.S. Sen. John Cornyn filed in April — one month after ProPublica and the Texas Tribune jointly published stories on the problem.

■ A ProPublica investigation, published in July with the New York Times, found that a New Jersey agency was pushing student loans with stringent rules, aggressive collections and few reprieves — even for borrowers who died. In December, Gov. Chris Christie signed into law a new requirement, prompted by our reporting, that required the state's student loan agency to forgive the debts of borrowers who die or become permanently disabled. The New Jersey Senate also passed bills requiring the agency to obtain a court order before garnishing wages, taking state tax refunds, or suspending professional licenses, legislation that is now before New Jersey's House. Another bill would set a borrower's monthly payment at a level that is considered affordable based on his or her income. In September, a New Jersey state commission unveiled a report urging the agency to offer better protections for borrowers, including recommendations to boost students' understanding of the terms before they sign for loans and to offer a rehabilitation program that allows borrowers who default to improve their payment status after several months of consistent payments.

■ After our reporting revealed that New York City landlords who collect lucrative tax breaks in exchange for providing rent-stabilized housing failed to register up to 200,000 apartments for the program, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a large-scale enforcement program targeting more than 3,000 rental buildings. Saying “enough is enough,” de Blasio said building owners who fail to follow the law will lose their tax breaks. Officials from the city housing authority and finance department have pledged to end the practice of granting the benefit without checking to make sure landlords comply with the rent rules. In addition, since ProPublica’s investigation on this issue, two City Council members introduced a bill that would require the city’s housing arm to audit 20% of buildings receiving the tax benefit, and mandate that violators return the money. State lawmakers introduced a bill that would institute much higher financial penalties for landlords who overcharge their tenants, and the city’s housing commissioner outlined a plan for hiring more staff and investing in technology to improve management of the program.

■ In 2014, ProPublica and the Washington Post investigated the business practices of USA Discounters, especially the company’s high-priced loans to active duty service personnel. In the wake of our coverage, the company went out of business. In September, USA Discounters also settled with 49 states and the District of Columbia (Colorado settled with the company separately) over a suit accusing the company of various abuses, including misleading customers about the quality and price of its merchandise, its loan contracts, as well as aggressive debt collection. The settlement deal required USA Discounters to pay \$40 million in penalties and to wipe out debt for its past customers.

■ A 2010 ProPublica investigation covered two Texas-based home mortgage companies, formerly known as Allied Home Mortgage Capital Corp. and Allied Home Mortgage Corp, that issued improper and risky home loans that later defaulted. Borrowers said they’d been lied to by Allied employees, who in some cases had siphoned loan proceeds for personal gain. In December a federal jury ordered the companies and their chief executive to pay nearly \$93 million for defrauding the government through these corrupt practices.



*ProPublica, in partnership with the Texas Tribune, launched “Hell and High Water,” a multimedia project showing that Houston is at risk of a major disaster. (Edmund D. Fountain, special to ProPublica)*

■ Following our 2014 reporting that Verizon and AT&T were attaching hidden tracking numbers to their subscribers’ internet activity, even when users opted out, Verizon agreed to pay \$1.35 million to settle charges from the Federal Communications Commission that the undeletable “zombie” cookies violated customers’ privacy. The company also signed a consent decree with the Federal Trade Commission after the government alleged that the company made false representations to consumers. In the settlement, Verizon agreed to modify its privacy policy and provide users an effective opt-out of tracking.

■ In a joint investigation with the Washington Post and German news outlets Handelsblatt and Bayerischer Rundfunk, ProPublica examined dividend-arbitrage transactions, a trade strategy that helps foreign investors avoid an estimated \$1 billion a year in taxes on dividends paid by German companies. Following our report, prosecutors in Frankfurt, Germany’s financial capital, launched an investigation into the trades, and the German Parliament voted to end the tax-avoidance deals in the country. Germany’s top finance official also released a statement criticizing div-arb, and a Danish member of the European Parliament called on the EU’s European Commission to ex-



*After our series of articles published with the NY Daily News, the number of nuisance abatement actions filed by the New York Police Department dropped significantly. (Edwin Torres for ProPublica)*

amine the transactions, which are draining Denmark and many of its neighbors of tens of millions of dollars in forgone tax revenues.

■ After a series of ProPublica articles identified dozens of cases of nursing home workers posting mocking photos of elderly residents on social media sites, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in August announced a plan to increase its oversight to prevent and punish such abuse. In a memo to state health departments, the federal agency said all nursing homes must have written policies on this issue that include an explicit ban on taking demeaning photographs of residents, procedures for investigating such complaints and reporting those involved to state licensing agencies for possible discipline. Sen. Charles Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, asked the U.S. Justice Department for specific information on how aggressively it pursues this form of elder abuse in nursing homes, days after Sen. Tom Carper similarly asked government regulators at the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services what they're doing to stop nursing home workers from the dehumanizing practice.

■ ProPublica and the Virginian-Pilot have been investigating whether Vietnam veterans' exposure to Agent Orange has also led to health problems in their children and grandchildren. At a ProPublica-sponsored Washington, D.C., event in June, Veterans Affairs officials announced new efforts to address this issue, including the agency's first nationwide survey of Vietnam veterans in more than three decades and requesting an outside panel of experts to continue its work studying multigenerational impacts of Agent Orange.

■ ProPublica's investigation on risk assessments, algorithms used across the criminal justice system that generate a score predicting a defendant's risk of committing a future crime, uncovered racial differences in the outcomes. Our analysis of the algorithm used in Florida, Wisconsin and other jurisdictions showed that it wrongly labeled black defendants as likely future criminals at twice the rate of mistaken predictions about white defendants. Citing our reporting, in July the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that, while judges may consider risk assessment scores during sentencing, warnings must be attached to the scores to flag the tool's limitations. The White House quoted ProPublica's findings in a report on the impacts of artificial intelligence across various sectors of society.

■ After a 2014 ProPublica and NPR story on Missouri's Heartland Regional Medical Center showed that the nonprofit hospital had for years sued low-income patients over their unpaid bills, Sen. Charles Grassley launched a Senate investigation which concluded in June. As a result of the scrutiny, the hospital overhauled its financial assistance policy and forgave the debts of thousands of former patients.

■ Following our report on abuse and neglect at the Carlton Palms Educational Center in Orlando, Florida, a residential facility for children and adults with developmental disabilities, officials stationed an investigator at the center and formed a special team to closely monitor staff and residents. The state also said it would move current residents to new homes.

■ In 2015, ProPublica and AL.com investigated a harsh Alabama law that charges women who used drugs during pregnancy with "chemical endangerment," a felony that carries a 10-year sentence even if the baby is born unharmed or if the drug is legal. In



May, the Alabama House of Representatives passed a bill to exempt women who use medically prescribed drugs from the state's law.

■ In October, ProPublica disclosed that Google quietly changed a major privacy policy. The company had previously promised that it would not reveal identifying information about its users to the advertising network DoubleClick, a Google subsidiary. However, this year Google updated its policy to say that users' web browsing activities "may be" combined with their personal information collected from Gmail and other login accounts. In response to our reporting, two advocacy groups filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) alleging that Google had deliberately deceived consumers and that the privacy policy change violated legally binding commitments that Google made to the FTC.

■ In the days leading to Election Day, reporters on ProPublica's Electionland project saw several instances of false information about voting requirements spreading on social media. One example we reported came from clothing retailer Urban Outfitters, which tweeted an election guide to its 1 million Twitter followers full of false information, including a claim that voters need a "voter's registration card" and an ID. After our story, Urban Outfitters promptly deleted the tweet and updated its guide.

■ After ProPublica reported that doctors who took payments from pharmaceutical companies prescribed more expensive, brand-name medications than those who didn't, two medical journals published studies that confirmed this link. JAMA Internal Medicine found significant evidence that doctors who received meals tied to specific drugs prescribed a higher proportion of those products than their peers, with the share of the drug prescriptions rising with the greater number of meals they received. A Harvard Medical School study found that Massachusetts physicians prescribed a higher proportion of brand-name drugs the more industry money they received.

■ A 2011 ProPublica investigation, published with Columbia's Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism and the Center for Public Integrity, found that, while student loan borrowers with severe disabilities are entitled to have federal student loans forgiven, the program for deciding whether they qualify is



*ProPublica and the Virginian-Pilot have been investigating whether Vietnam veterans' exposure to Agent Orange has also led to health problems in their children and grandchildren. (Dustin Franz for ProPublica)*

deeply dysfunctional. Federal officials consequently changed the program's regulations, and this April the Department of Education announced that it will offer to write off \$7.7 billion of student debt owed by approximately 387,000 borrowers who have become disabled.

■ Following our 2014 report on abusive discipline techniques at the Judge Rotenberg Center, a Boston-area school for children with severe developmental disabilities, the Food and Drug Administration moved to ban the facility's use of a controversial electric shock device. In a 124-page document proposing the ban, the FDA accused the Rotenberg Center of underreporting harmful effects of electric shocks and misleading families about alternative treatments.

■ After our story on a Habitat for Humanity New York project that displaced several low-income families in the process of buying and renovating buildings in Brooklyn, New York City Council member Robert Cornegy asked the charity's local affiliate to find housing for the families. Habitat for Humanity's New York chapter took responsibility, encouraging the families named in the article to contact them directly in order to "help them find solutions that meet their needs."

# Recognition for our work

Our work was honored in 2016 as follows:

ProPublica's collaboration with The Marshall Project, "**An Unbelievable Story of Rape**," about the hunt for a serial rapist, won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting. The award is the third Pulitzer Prize for ProPublica. Written by ProPublica senior reporter T. Christian Miller and The Marshall Project's Ken Armstrong, "An Unbelievable Story of Rape" also received the George Polk Award for justice reporting, the American Society of News Editors' Deborah Howell Award for Non-Deadline Writing, Columbia Journalism School's Meyer "Mike" Berger Award for human interest reporting, the PEN Center USA Literary Award for Journalism, the Deadline Club Award for feature reporting, the John Bartlow Martin Award for Public Interest Magazine Journalism and the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting. The piece was nominated for a National Magazine Award for feature writing, in addition to being a finalist for the Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma, and the Nieman Foundation's Taylor Family Award for Fairness

in Journalism. For his work on this article and previous reporting on rape, Miller won the End Violence Against Women International Media Excellence Award.

ProPublica senior reporter Abrahm Lustgarten was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for National

Reporting for "**Killing the Colorado**," his groundbreaking investigation on the water crisis in the American West. The piece won the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Communications Award in the online category, received special rec-



*ProPublica senior reporter Abrahm Lustgarten was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for "Killing the Colorado," his groundbreaking investigation on the water crisis in the American West. (Bryan Schutmaat for ProPublica)*



ognition from the Knight-Risser Prize for Western Environmental Journalism, and is a finalist for the Online Journalism Award for explanatory reporting.

For a series of articles that explored the changing nature of American democracy, reporter **Alec MacGillis** received the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting at a dinner in Washington, D.C., at which President Barack Obama gave the keynote speech.

Our reporting with NPR News, **“Insult to Injury,”** that showed how states sharply reduced workers’ compensation benefits at the behest of insurers and big businesses won the IRE Medal, the highest honor bestowed by Investigative Reporters and Editors; an IRE Award in the print/online category; the Edward R. Murrow Award for online/audio news series; the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism for explanatory reporting; the Deadline

Club Awards for public service; two Best in Business Awards from the Society of American Business Editors and Writers for digital innovation and digital investigative; the Deadline Award for public service; and a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for infographics.

**“Color of Debt,”** our analysis of racial disparities in debt collection lawsuits and wage garnishment by Paul Kiel, Annie Waldman and Al Shaw, won the National Press Club Award for consumer journalism-periodicals, an Online News Association Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers’ Best in Business Award for digital explanatory, and a Deadline Club Award for minority focus. The project was also a finalist for the National Association of Black Journalists Salute to Excellence Awards in the online news project category, the Gerald Loeb Award for beat reporting, the Data Journalism Award’s news data app of the year, and the Deadline Club Awards for beat reporting.

A collaboration with PBS Frontline which revealed a political death squad that murdered several Vietnamese-American journalists with total impunity, **“Terror in Little Saigon,”** was nominated for an Emmy Award for outstanding investigative journalism—long form. The project was also a finalist for the Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma.

Our coverage, with NPR News, of how the **Red Cross** has failed disaster victims in Haiti and made dubious claims of success, won the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for radio/audio



*Our coverage, with NPR News, of how the Red Cross has failed disaster victims in Haiti and made dubious claims of success, won the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for radio/audio and was a finalist for the Online News Association’s Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award.*

*(Marie Arago, special to ProPublica)*



and was a finalist for the Online News Association's Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award.

Our series with the *Virginian-Pilot*, on the **ongoing impact of Agent Orange on the health of Vietnam veterans and their families**, won the Online Journalism Award for topical reporting.

Reporting on **abuses by the for-profit company AdvoServ**, which runs schools and residential facilities for children and adults with disabilities, won the National Award for Education Reporting in the investigative category.

**"Surgeon Scorecard,"** which lifted the curtain on the complication rates of more than 16,000 surgeons nationwide and enabled Americans to compare their results for the first time, won the Deadline Club Award for science, medical or environmental reporting; the Asian American Journalists Association's Al Neuharth Award for Innovation in Investigative Journalism; and a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for features; and was a finalist for the Online News Association's University of Florida Award for Investigative Data Journalism.

Our collaboration with the New York Daily News, **exposing startling abuses by the New York City Police Department** under the city's nuisance abatement law, won the Sidney Hillman Foundation's monthly Sidney Award for May, and was a finalist for the Online News Association's Knight Award for Public Service.

Our examination of how **police failed to stop former NFL player and serial rapist Darren Sharper** for years won the Society

of Professional Journalists' Green Eyeshades Award in the sports reporting category.

ProPublica news applications developer Sisi Wei won the **Data Journalism Award for best individual portfolio**. Wei was recognized for news applications and data visualizations including "Surgeon Scorecard," "Debt by Degrees" and "Money as a Weapons System," which let readers browse strange and often wasteful projects funded by commanders during the war in Afghanistan.

Our reporting on **faulty roadside drug tests that are wrongfully convicting people** won the Sidney Hillman Foundation's Sidney Award for August.

Reporting on **white workers in the Rust Belt who were effectively written off by Hillary Clinton** and the Democrats, won Payday Report's first-ever Anne Braden Award.

ProPublica was named a finalist for the Online Journalism Award for **general excellence in online journalism**.



*Reporting on abuses by the for-profit company AdvoServ, which runs schools and residential facilities for children and adults with disabilities, won the National Award for Education Reporting in the investigative category.*

*(Pep Montserrat, special to ProPublica)*

**“Devils, Deals and the DEA,”** our feature on how the DEA brought down one of the most vicious Mexican drug cartels — and the murky aftermath — was a finalist for the Deadline Club Award for enterprise reporting.

Our investigation into which colleges help low-income students the most, **“Debt by Degrees,”** was a finalist for the National Award for Education Reporting for data journalism and the Gerald Loeb Award for images/graphics/interactives.

Original illustrations featured in our investigation on **Firestone’s activities in Liberia** during the country’s brutal civil war received a Society of Illustrators silver medal.

Reporting on “flashbangs” and the growing **militarization of law enforcement** was a runner-up for the **John Jay College/H.F. Guggenheim Excellence in Criminal Justice Reporting Awards.**

Six ProPublica reporters were named finalists for the **Livingston**

**Awards,** which honor outstanding achievement by journalists under the age of 35: Robert Faturechi for his investigation into a failed super PAC; Jeff Larson for his story revealing how U.S. military officials used cell phones that were vulnerable to hackers; Michael Grabell and Lena Groeger for their project showing how states have dismantled compensation for injured workers; and Cezary Podkul and Marcelo Rochabrun for their reporting on New York City’s broken rent-stabilization system.

Our **news applications and data visualizations** won a host of awards, including Society for News Design Awards of Excellence for infographics on cruise ship safety hazards and workers’ comp, as well as features on the water crisis in the American West and military waste. The Malofiej International Infographics Awards also bestowed bronze medals for visual reporting on health data breaches and our Facebook video on police failures to stop a serial rapist in the NFL.

Several of our illustrations were honored by American Illustration, selected for the organization’s annual showcase of excellence in illustration. Their hardcover collection of winning images will feature three original illustrations from two ProPublica investigations: **“The Narco-terror Trap,”** which raises questions about alleged connections between drug trafficking and terrorism, and **“Devils, Deals and the DEA”** about how the DEA brought down a vicious Mexican drug cartel with an unsatisfying aftermath.



*Original illustrations featured in our investigation on Firestone’s activities in Liberia during the country’s brutal civil war received a Society of Illustrators silver medal. (Matt Rota for ProPublica)*

# ProPublica's Growing Publishing Platform

Openness is the essence of the ProPublica publishing model. We usually publish under a Creative Commons license, in the hope that sharing our stories will enable them to reach bigger audiences and increase the probability of real world impact. Our major stories are often published jointly with leading news organizations, in print, on television, on radio and online. ProPublica has also used new tools for storytelling and actively engaged audiences through social media to build communities, crowdsource information, raise our profile and further increase the opportunities to spur change.

<b>2,600,000</b>	Average ProPublica.org pageviews per month	UP 12%
<b>1,100,000</b>	Average unique ProPublica.org visitors per month	UP 15%
<b>95,000</b>	Email subscribers	
<b>467,000</b>	Twitter followers	UP 13%
<b>210,000</b>	Facebook fans	UP 70%

## Publishing Partners, 2016

ProPublica has had 139 publishing partners in eight and a half years. We choose each partner with an eye toward maximizing the impact of the story in question. Here is a list of our 35 partners in 2016 (new partners marked in **bold**):

- Albany Times-Union
- AL.com
- Atlantic
- **Børsen [Denmark]**
- Boston Globe
- Center for Investigative Reporting
- Chronicle of Higher Education
- **Clarion-Ledger [Jackson, MS]**
- Daily Beast
- Dallas Morning News
- **Des Moines Register**
- Foreign Policy
- Frontline
- **IRE Journal**
- **Las Vegas Review-Journal**
- Miami Herald
- Mother Jones
- NPR News
- Politico
- **Post and Courier [Charleston, SC]**
- New York Daily News
- New Yorker
- New York Times
- **Real Deal**
- Seattle Times
- Source
- Tampa Bay Times
- **Texas Tribune**
- This American Life
- **Town & Country**
- Univision
- USA Today
- Virginian-Pilot
- Washington Post
- WNYC



# Financial Information, 2016

## Revenues

Board of Directors contributions and related grants	<b>\$3,756,000</b>
Major grants and gifts (\$50,000 and above)	<b>\$9,053,000</b>
Online donations	<b>\$2,160,000</b>
Other grants and gifts	<b>\$1,823,000</b>
Earned income and interest	<b>\$288,000</b>
Business Advisory Council contributions	<b>\$150,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17,230,000</b>

## Expenses

News salaries, payments and benefits	<b>\$8,744,000</b>
Non-news salaries and benefits	<b>\$1,634,000</b>
Personnel support	<b>\$1,136,000</b>
Outreach	<b>\$459,000</b>
Professional fees	<b>\$62,000</b>
Occupancy and office	<b>\$1,198,000</b>
Capital costs	<b>\$74,000</b>
Taxes	<b>\$4,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,311,000</b>

*Notes: More than 26,000 total donors. All figures preliminary and unaudited. Business Advisory Council contributions include only those not categorized elsewhere.*

# Officers and Staff

As of January 1, 2017:

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**Richard Tofel**

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**Robin Fields**

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# Governance

## Board of Directors

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## Journalism Advisory Board

ProPublica has a journalism advisory board to advise ProPublica's editors from time to time on the full range of issues related to ProPublica's journalism, from ethical issues to the direction of its reporting efforts:

**Jill Abramson**, former executive editor, The New York Times

**David Boardman**, dean, Temple University School of Media & Communications

**Raymond Bonner**, writer living in New York

**Robert A. Caro**, historian and biographer of Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson

**Sheila Coronel**, director, Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, Columbia Journalism School

**L. Gordon Crovitz**, interim Chief Executive Officer of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; former publisher of The Wall Street Journal; partner, Journalism Online

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**Cynthia A. Tucker**, columnist, Universal Press Syndicate



## Business Advisory Council

ProPublica also has a Business Advisory Council, a group of executives who advise on emerging business and technology issues:

**Mark Colodny**, chair, managing director, Warburg Pincus LLC

**Ben Boyd**, president, practices, sectors and offerings, Edelman

**David Coulter**, special limited partner, Warburg Pincus LLC

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**Sean Fieler**, president, Equinox Partners

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