

 PROPUBLICA

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Ten Years On



Highlights of the Year at ProPublica



Claudio Papapietro for ProPublica

Cover: Months after the Trump administration was ordered to stop separating children from their parents at the border, ProPublica was the first to reveal that the separations continued. In one case, a four-year-old Salvadoran boy, named Brayan, had been taken from his father and sent to a foster home in New York. After our story, authorities reversed course and reunited the boy with his father. (Ilana Panich-Linsman for ProPublica)

Impact

Our journalism spurred a host of real-world changes, including the reversal of President Donald Trump's migrant family separation policy; the first federal legislation in decades addressing maternal deaths; the end of a Facebook practice that facilitated discrimination; and the resignation of leaders from a troubled children's charity operating in Liberia. Many of these changes came at a local level, including a politician losing his bid for reelection in Chicago, a police chief's resignation in Indiana after revelations about police brutality and the arrests of white supremacists responsible for violence in Charlottesville.

Important Stories

Our work revealed how a trio of Mar-a-Lago businessmen are quietly shaping policies at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and it explained how a budget-deprived IRS is unable to pursue tax cheats. We unmasked side deals and hidden incentives in the health insurance industry; traced how junk forensic science has become entrenched in the criminal justice system; exposed Chicago's aggressive and unequal ticketing practices and revealed apparent age discrimination at IBM.

Local Focus

Projects from the inaugural ProPublica Local Reporting Network exposed how the natural gas industry is gaining power in West Virginia, lapses in worker safety at nuclear facilities in New Mexico, failures in rural Illinois public housing and how the Orlando

Fire Department's outdated active shooter policies hampered its response to the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting. Our New York reporting uncovered abuses and prompted reform in the city's commercial trash collection, while ProPublica Illinois exposed allegations of abuse and negligence at immigrant youth shelters in the Chicago area.

Award-Winning

Our collaboration with NPR on the maternal mortality crisis in the U.S. was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting and won the Peabody Award in the radio/podcast category and the George Polk Award for medical reporting. "The Tax Divide" with the Chicago Tribune was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting and won the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism in the local category, ProPublica, in partnership with WNYC, received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for our "Trump, Inc." podcast, and ProPublica won its fourth Online Journalism Award for general excellence.

Partnerships

We extended our roster of publishing partners to 184 news organizations, with 59 in 2018 alone. Our partners over the past year included the New York Times, the Washington Post, NPR News, Frontline, Time, Univision and the Atlantic, as well as new partners including Newsday, Quartz and Reveal.



Claudio Papapietro for ProPublica

Evolving Platform

ProPublica is reaching new audiences through third-party distribution platforms such as Apple News, Microsoft News, Google News and SmartNews. Traffic grew substantially on such platforms, with these monthly average page views climbing 64 percent to 2 million.

Business Progress

Revenues reached another record, topping \$30 million for the year from more than 29,000 donors, and our cumulative reserve now exceeds \$25.5 million, more than 90 percent of 2019 projected spending.

Ten Years On

A decade ago, we launched ProPublica’s website with a brief note, “Welcome to the Starting Line.” In that [June 10, 2008, post](#), signed by founding editor-in-chief Paul Steiger and then-managing editor Stephen Engelberg, we acknowledged that ProPublica was something of an experiment. We were 20 people, backed by a \$10 million annual target budget and a three-year commitment from the Sandler Foundation, with some new ideas about how to publish investigative journalism.

Our model for distributing stories — co-publishing with major news outlets like “60 Minutes,” the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times and Politico — was untested. There was no clear sense of where the money would come from when we sought a broader group of backers.

Despite these unknowns, we were unwavering in our commitment to investigative reporting as an essential component of democracy. Even if we didn’t know quite how this experiment would unfold, we believed in taking on the toughest subjects, shining a light on powerful institutions of all sorts, and presenting deeply reported stories with moral force — and an eye toward spurring change.

Ten years later, it's clear that an increasing number of people share these values. We were thrilled and humbled to make a lot of friends in our first decade. ProPublica has had 184 publishing partners, including 59 in 2018 alone. Our budget has grown to more than \$26 million for 2019, which supports about 120 employees working at our national operation, at ProPublica Illinois and reporting for our Local Reporting Network. Thousands of people now donate every month, part of a flow of smaller donations that in 2018 added up to more than \$4 million.

Changemaking

Perhaps the achievement we're most proud of is the impact of our work over the years. In a cynical age when many believe that the outcomes are “rigged” and unchangeable, we have repeatedly shown that powerful, fact-based journalism has the potential to change minds, laws and the lives of ordinary people.

In June, as the plight of families separated at the U.S.-Mexico border gained national attention, ProPublica released audio of migrant children inside a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility. The sounds of children sobbing and begging for their parents served as evidence of the tragedy underway. Lawmakers cited ProPublica's audio as they condemned the administration's policy, and protesters blared the recording at demonstrations across the country. Within 48 hours, President Trump reversed his policy of separating children from their parents. A federal judge in California ordered that parents and children be reunited within 30 days. Within a month, the child heard in the recording pleading to call her aunt was reunited with her mother.



Protesters in Monrovia call on the Liberian government to revoke More Than Me's accreditation and strip the charity of its ability to run schools. (Ahmed Jallanzo/European Pressphoto Agency for ProPublica)



Six-year-old Alison Jimena Valencia Madrid is reunited with her mother, Cindy, one month after being separated at the U.S.-Mexico border. (Nadia Sussman/ ProPublica)

Later in the year, we reported that border agents resumed the removal of some children from their parents by claiming that the parents were criminals and thus a danger to their children. Our story focused on a case in which the Department of Homeland Security claimed, without evidence, that a Salvadoran man was a gang member and separated him from his 4-year-old son. Two weeks after the investigation published, and 11 weeks after they had been separated, the child was returned to his father.

To help support accountability reporting across the country, especially at the local and regional levels, ProPublica Illinois had its first full year of operation in 2018, and we kicked off the ProPublica Local Reporting Network. Through this initiative, we supported seven investigative projects at local news organizations (in cities with populations below 1 million), in each case paying a reporter's salary and benefits, in addition to providing ProPublica's expertise in data, research and engagement.

In one of the inaugural projects from ProPublica Illinois, published in partnership with the Chicago Tribune, our work exposed devastating inequities in property tax assessments done by the Cook County assessor. In the Illinois Democratic primary election, fairness in the property tax system was a major issue — and Assessor Joseph Berrios, who also served as the Cook County Democratic chairman, lost his bid for re-election.

As part of our Local Reporting Network, the South Bend Tribune in Indiana examined the use of

force in the neighboring Elkhart Police Department, uncovering startling, previously undisclosed acts of misconduct. The Tribune and ProPublica also found that, while the police chief and most of the department’s supervisors had been disciplined for carelessness and incompetence, they kept their jobs and were often promoted. In the aftermath of this reporting, the police chief resigned, and Elkhart’s mayor announced an independent review of the city’s Police Department — before abandoning his own re-election campaign.

Internationally, our investigation “Unprotected,” co-published with Time magazine, and an accompanying documentary created by ProPublica Films looked into an acclaimed charity called More Than Me. Founded by American Katie Meyler, the Liberian

school promised to rescue some of the world’s most vulnerable girls from life on the streets, but from the very beginning, children placed under its care were being raped by one of the nonprofit’s leaders. Days after our investigation, Meyler temporarily stepped aside as CEO, and the organization’s board chairman resigned. Amid protests in Liberia calling for the government to revoke More Than Me’s accreditation and permission to run its schools, seven Liberian government agencies vowed to take action as part of a “full-scale investigation” into the charity.

Details of much more impact can be found in the next section of this report, an accounting we offer three times each year — in January, May and September.

The Stories in Data

ProPublica’s use of data analysis and visual storytelling has expanded substantially since our founding. The initial staff of ProPublica included just two people who knew how to write computer code and could create, when needed, a graphic or two. In the decade since, we’ve added a team of data journalists and pioneered the field of news application development, brought on web designers and producers, and, most recently, expanded into social and long-form video. From our immersive investigation showing what it

sounds and looks like [when a gas driller overruns your property](#), to an animated map taking readers through [a dangerous route in New York’s private commercial garbage collection](#), this year’s work kept our newsroom at the frontiers of contemporary journalism.

In the weeks ahead of the 2018 midterm elections, ProPublica’s Facebook Political Ad Collector gained steam and insights. Our developers had earlier designed the software as a solution to the hard-to-track nature of online political ads, which appear on some people’s screens while never being shown to others. When participating Facebook users downloaded the extension, we automatically identified the political ads displayed on their newsfeeds and collected them in a [public database](#). By Election Day, we had collected more than 100,000 political ads from nearly 20,000 Facebook users, allowing us to report on ads that were actually scams and malware, negative ads that ignored Federal Election Commission rules by failing to disclose who paid for and approved them, and mysterious Facebook pages pushing fringe candidates.

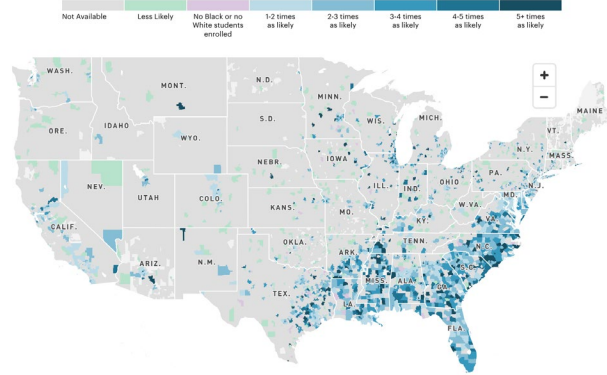
ProPublica Illinois and WBEZ produced a series of stories examining how Chicago’s reliance on vehicle ticketing to generate revenue — in addition to unequal enforcement and punitive collection measures — has led to massive debt in low-income and especially black neighborhoods. The project team collected more than 54 million parking, standing and vehicle compliance tickets issued since 1996 and



Our animated map follows one sanitation driver’s night on a private garbage truck in New York City. (Al Shaw, ProPublica, and Kiera Feldman, the Investigative Fund)

made the aggregate data public in an accompanying database. Users can explore [The Ticket Trap](#) to see how ticketing, debt and the rates at which people appeal their tickets compare across Chicago's 50 wards. The project led to the Chicago City Council passing a package of reforms to the city's ticketing system, described below.

As part of a series on racial disparities in education, ProPublica launched an enormous fact-finding mission, collecting and analyzing troves of Education Department data. This undertaking culminated in [Miseducation](#), a groundbreaking database allowing users to look up more than 96,000 individual public and charter schools and 17,000 districts to see how they compare on educational opportunity and school discipline.



Miseducation, our interactive database on racial disparities in education, shows how public or charter schools compare on educational opportunity and school discipline. (Lena V. Groeger, Annie Waldman and David Eads, ProPublica)

The Work Continues

In just the last few months of our 10th full year, ProPublica has produced important, challenging and innovatively presented stories that have often sparked real-world change. This work included stories on how a [housing program for mentally ill New Yorkers](#) has proven unsafe, inhumane and sometimes deadly; a two-part Frontline documentary on [violent white supremacist groups](#); eye-opening articles on how a budget-deprived IRS is [unable to pursue tax cheats](#); an examination of the Trump administration's [continued efforts to separate families at the border](#), months after it claimed to have stopped; a look at the [junk forensic science of bloodstain-pattern analysis](#) that has become entrenched in the criminal justice system; and a report on the [health insurance industry's work with data brokers](#) to vacuum up our personal details.

Much has changed since ProPublica published its first story, but the value of investigative journalism with moral force remains. We're committed to continuing to grow, and to lead, in our next 10 years and beyond.



Abraham Clemente, who participated in an independent living program for mentally ill New Yorkers, in his squalid former Brooklyn apartment. (George Etheredge, special to ProPublica)

Additional Impact

Since ProPublica was started 10 years ago, impact has been at the core of our mission, and it remains a guiding principle and yardstick for our success today. We measure our impact not in terms of audience size or honors, but real-world change. In addition to the impact from our reporting on the Trump administration's family separation policy, inequities in Chicago's property tax assessment system, use of force in the Elkhart Police Department and how an American charity failed the Liberian girls under its care, all described earlier in this report, our journalism in 2018 spurred such change in a number of important areas.

Laws to Improve Maternal Health Passed

Our reporting with NPR about maternal mortality in the U.S. spurred significant change. After years of congressional inaction, in December Congress approved (and President Trump signed into law) a bill providing \$60 million in new funding for states to establish or improve panels to investigate deaths of expectant and new mothers. The Senate Appropriations Committee also voted to approve \$50 million in new funding, which was passed in the final appropriations package, for programs aimed at reducing the rate of women who die during pregnancy or childbirth. Citing the reporting, state and local lawmakers around the country adopted bills aimed at reforming how maternal deaths are identified and investigated. Connecticut, Indiana, Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., passed laws creating maternal mortality review committees to scrutinize deaths and near-deaths among expectant and new mothers, and to make policy recommendations to improve maternal health. A similar bill is pending in New Jersey.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which sets standards of care for obstetrician-gynecologists, also released sweeping new recommendations for improving maternal care, including guidelines for doctors to see new mothers sooner and more frequently, and for insurers to cover the increased visits. In addition, in August, after ProPublica reached out to a number of consumer health sites that published imprecise, outdated or misleading information about preeclampsia — a dangerous form of hypertension that can develop during pregnancy or in the days and weeks after childbirth — the Mayo Clinic corrected its information. The Cleveland Clinic, Harvard Health Publishing and MedlinePlus also agreed to make necessary updates.

Discriminatory Facebook Policies Halted

In 2016, ProPublica reported that Facebook allows advertisers to buy credit, housing and employment ads that exclude anyone with an “affinity” for African-American, Asian-American and Hispanic issues from seeing them. Our 2017 follow-up found that



Heather Dobbs holds her daughter, Claire. Following a C-section in 2017, Dobbs nearly died due to a hemorrhage. (Joanie Tobin for ProPublica)

the social network had not remedied the problem, prompting Facebook to temporarily stop advertisers from excluding viewers by race while it reviewed its ad system. In July, Facebook said it would no longer allow advertisers to exclude users by federally protected categories.

Wrongfully Convicted Man Exonerated

In 2017, we reported on Demetrius Smith, who was wrongfully convicted of murder in Baltimore and agreed to an Alford plea — a deal that allows defendants to maintain their innocence while at the same time pleading guilty and accepting the status of a convicted felon. Our story showed that the prosecutor had blocked Smith’s request to revise his unusual plea deal and modify his sentence. Prompted by the story, the prosecutor filed a motion saying he had been wrong and asked a judge to schedule a new hearing for Smith. In January, that hearing ended with Smith’s criminal record being cleared.

Medical Conflicts of Interest Eliminated

ProPublica published a series of investigations with the New York Times detailing undisclosed relationships between Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and for-profit health care companies, highlighting conflicts of interest. A September story on Dr. José Baselga, MSK’s chief medical officer, detailed his failure to disclose corporate board memberships and payments from companies connected to cancer research in his published research articles, even when he was reporting on the results of studies conducted by those companies. He resigned from his job at MSK

within days after initially insisting his conduct was appropriate and ethical. By December, Baselga also stepped down as one of the editors-in-chief of Cancer Discovery, a prominent medical journal. In addition, MSK’s CEO, Dr. Craig Thompson, resigned from his seats on the boards of Merck and Charles River Laboratories and made new conflict disclosures, as did other MSK staff. After our investigation, MSK also announced that a vice president who oversees hospital ventures with for-profit companies would turn over to the hospital a nearly \$1.4 million stake in a biotech company that he received for representing MSK on the company’s board.

White Supremacists Dismissed and Arrested

In May, ProPublica partnered with Frontline to publish an investigation that identified former and active-duty members of the military as members of Atomwaffen Division, a neo-Nazi group. Within weeks, the U.S. Marine Corps announced that it had opened a criminal investigation into the activities of Lance Cpl. Vasillios Pistolis, whom the report identified as a violent white supremacist who took part in the Charlottesville demonstration in August of 2017. In June, Pistolis was convicted at a court-martial on charges of disobeying orders and making false statements, and he was dismissed from the Marines. In July, ProPublica and Frontline reported on the violent white supremacist Rise Above Movement. One day later, Michael Miselis, an aerospace engineer with a government security clearance whom we identified as a member of RAM, was out of his job at defense contractor Northrop Grumman. In August, the Marines issued updated orders prohibiting participation in white supremacist groups, encouraging members to report fellow Marines engaged in these activities and tightening rules on accountability. In October, citing ProPublica and Frontline’s reporting, federal prosecutors announced they had arrested or charged four members or associates of RAM — Robert Rundo, Robert Boman, Tyler Laube and Aaron Eason — over their alleged role in the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville. If convicted, the men could face five years in prison for each of two federal riot charges.

Police Cooperation With Immigration Officials Regulated

In April, ProPublica and the Philadelphia Inquirer reported on tactics used by state and local police officers in Pennsylvania, without guidelines or oversight,

to help U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement round up immigrants for deportation, including the questioning and arrests of Hispanic motorists during traffic stops. In June, the Pennsylvania State Police announced that officers will now be required to file a report any time they call immigration authorities to the scene of a traffic stop, detailing the circumstances of the call.

Red Cross Official Resigns Over Handling of Sexual Misconduct

In January, we reported on Gerald Anderson, a former senior executive at the American Red Cross, who had been forced out of the organization after he harassed a subordinate and was accused of raping another. Red Cross general counsel David Meltzer had lauded Anderson on his way out and gave him a positive reference, helping him land a new position at Save the Children. When ProPublica contacted Save the Children about the circumstances of Anderson’s departure, the organization placed Anderson on administrative leave. Weeks later, he was no longer employed by Save the Children. Following the article, Meltzer also resigned from the Red Cross, saying that he deeply regretted his handling of the sexual misconduct case.

Unusual Domestic Violence Policy Reversed

In early 2017, ProPublica reported on “dual arrests” in Connecticut — instances in which police arrest both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic violence.



Sanna Dilawar was arrested along with her husband, who assaulted her, for fighting back during the attack. After our reporting, Connecticut reversed this policy of “dual arrests.” (David “Dee” Delgado for ProPublica)

The state has a dual arrest rate about 10 times higher than the national average. Experts say this dissuades victims from calling police because of the fear of arrest and the lasting damage of a formal criminal record. In May, the Connecticut legislature passed a bill, which the governor signed into law, to end the practice of arresting victims of domestic violence along with their abusers when they fight back during the course of an assault.

Discriminatory Police Practice Abandoned

ProPublica and The Florida Times-Union reported in late 2017 that police in Jacksonville, Florida, disproportionately issued pedestrian tickets to black residents, almost all of them in the city's poorest neighborhoods. After the story, a Jacksonville assistant state attorney issued a bulletin to the city's Sheriff's Office detailing the proper enforcement of Florida's pedestrian statutes, and the Jacksonville City Council president and other local lawmakers called for the suspension of issuing tickets to pedestrians. The Sheriff's Office conducted bias training for some officers and trained others on the proper ways to issue pedestrian tickets.

Neo-Nazis Lose Access to Online Platforms

In February, ProPublica reported that the California man accused of killing a gay, Jewish University of Pennsylvania student was a member of Atomwaffen Division, a neo-Nazi group. Our reporters obtained



After our story showed pedestrian tickets are disproportionately issued to black residents of Jacksonville, Florida, local lawmakers called for the suspension of pedestrian ticket writing. (Cameron Cottrill, special to ProPublica)

over 250,000 messages from the group's secret chat room, showing that other Atomwaffen members cheered the death. After this story, at least four technology companies — including YouTube; Discord, a chat app for video gamers; Steam, a community discussion board for gamers; and Inktale, an online T-shirt retailer — took steps to ban the hate group from using their online services and platforms.

Hazardous Clinical Trials Scrutinized as Star Psychiatrist Resigns

In April, ProPublica Illinois reported that child psychiatrist Mani Pavuluri, whose renowned University of Illinois at Chicago clinic drew families from around the country, violated protocols and put children at risk. Our reporting detailed how Pavuluri violated the terms of a federal grant by testing lithium on children younger than 13, failed to properly alert parents of the study's risks and falsified data to cover up the misconduct. After the story, Pavuluri resigned from UIC, and in December, the state Department of Financial and Professional Regulation launched an investigation of her conduct.

Education Department's Civil Rights Records Under Review

In June, we reported that the U.S. Department of Education, under the direction of Secretary Betsy DeVos, scuttled more than 1,200 civil rights investigations inherited from the Obama administration. Our analysis showed that the Trump administration is less likely than its predecessor to find wrongdoing by school districts on issues ranging from racial and sexual harassment to meeting the educational needs of disabled students. In November, the Office of Inspector General for the Education Department announced that it is scrutinizing how the department handles civil rights complaints.

Independent Monitor Appointed to Oversee Child Welfare Agency

ProPublica Illinois published an investigation highlighting the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' practice of holding children in psychiatric hospitals, sometimes for months, after physicians have cleared them for release. One week after the story, which was co-published with the Atlantic, Illinois lawmakers called for a public hearing, demanding state child welfare officials explain why

they routinely fail to find better homes for hundreds of children in psychiatric hospitals. The acting Cook County public guardian filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of hundreds of children and teenagers in state care who have been held in hospitals beyond medical necessity, calling the practice inhumane and unconstitutional. Following a request from the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, which has monitored the state's child welfare agency for decades as part of a federal consent decree, a federal judge took the rare step of appointing an independent monitor to oversee reforms at the agency.

In October, ProPublica Illinois also uncovered numerous allegations of sexual abuse and assault against children who were patients at Aurora Chicago Lakeshore Hospital, a psychiatric facility, while in the care of DCFS. After the report, federal authorities announced they were pulling funding from the hospital — a mandate a judge has temporarily reversed after the hospital asked for a restraining order until it could appeal the decision. State lawmakers and the ACLU of Illinois demanded a comprehensive investigation of the facility, and DCFS vowed to stop sending children there. The agency agreed to a full, independent assessment involving children in its care placed at the hospital, and the ACLU of Illinois took the agency to court in an attempt to move the remaining children in state care out of the hospital.

Unreliable Forensics Re-examined

In May, ProPublica and the New York Times Magazine told the story of Joe Bryan, a former Texas high school principal who has spent more than 30 years in prison for the murder of his wife, a crime he has long insisted he did not commit. Bryan's conviction rested largely on bloodstain-pattern analysis, a technique used throughout the criminal justice system, despite widespread concerns about its reliability. After our story, the Texas Forensic Science Commission asked a prominent bloodstain-pattern analyst to re-examine the case. Subsequently, the influential state body found that the analysis was "not accurate or scientifically supported" and that the expert who testified was "entirely wrong," although a state judge refused to overturn Bryan's conviction.

Risky Hospital Program Loses Coverage

ProPublica collaborated with the Houston Chronicle to report on pervasive problems with St. Luke's Medical Center's once-renowned heart transplant

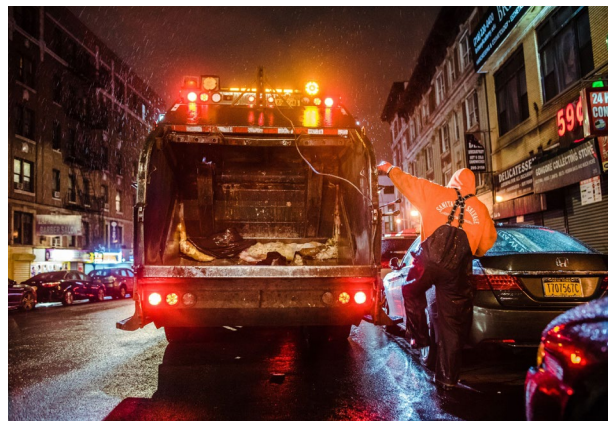
program, which in recent years had some of the worst outcomes in the country. After our story appeared in May, the hospital temporarily suspended the program to assess its care. It reopened two weeks later, changing procedures and staffing but not finding any "systemic issues." Soon after, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services made a rare decision to stop Medicare funding of the hospital's heart transplant program, saying it hasn't done enough to improve care after a string of patient deaths.

Accountability for Prosecutorial Misconduct Instituted

In 2013, ProPublica published a series of reports finding that New York prosecutors are almost never punished for misconduct, such as withholding evidence and tolerating false testimony, that can land innocent people in prison or let the guilty go free. In June, the New York Legislature passed legislation authorizing the governor, state lawmakers and New York's chief judge to create an independent panel that would investigate allegations of prosecutorial misconduct. The bill also empowered the panel to issue warnings and recommend sanctions, including dismissals. In August, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the bill into law.

Troubled Garbage Collection Company Ceases Operations

In January, ProPublica profiled dangerous practices in the world of private commercial garbage collection in New York City. We reported that, when a man was killed in 2017 by a truck owned by one of the city's



Falling off the back of a garbage truck is a common way for private sanitation workers to be killed on the job. (Michael Santiago for ProPublica)

largest trash haulers, Sanitation Salvage, workers told police he was a homeless man who jumped on their truck. Our investigation uncovered the identity of the man, Mouctar Diallo, and revealed that he was actually a helper who was working on the truck that killed him. When a pedestrian was killed by a truck driven by the same driver in April, we followed up with an investigation into the company, discovering labor and safety violations. In August, the Business Integrity Commission, which regulates New York's private trash industry, suspended Sanitation Salvage's license to operate and barred the driver involved in both fatalities from working in the industry. The company surrendered its operating license in November.

"Independent" watchdog group shuts down

In January, ProPublica Illinois and the Chicago Sun-Times revealed that the right-leaning Illinois Policy Institute gave Project Six — an organization that described itself as a nonprofit, independent, nonpartisan, anti-corruption watchdog group — 98 percent of its first-year budget. Project Six had previously refused to disclose its funding sources. A further investigation revealed that the Illinois Policy Institute's CEO and his associates moved millions of dollars around the five interconnected nonprofits they ran, steering money to for-profit ventures in which they have a stake. These revelations prompted swift criticism from the Republican governor. In April 2018, Project Six announced that it was shutting down.



After we reported on inaccuracies in the analysis of DNA samples in New York City crime labs, a state appeals court overturned a conviction citing "less than convincing" DNA evidence. (Michael Hirshon for ProPublica)

Wrongful Conviction Based on Erroneous DNA Testing Overturned

In 2017, we reported on a DNA testing technique used by New York City's medical examiner and dozens of other jurisdictions to analyze difficult DNA samples from crime scenes. The article cited growing evidence that the technique is inaccurate, potentially putting innocent people in prison. In October, Mayer Herskovic, featured in ProPublica's investigation, had his conviction overturned and the underlying indictment dismissed by the state appeals court because of "less than convincing" DNA evidence against him.

Discriminatory Ticketing Practices Reformed

ProPublica Illinois published a series of stories, in partnership with WBEZ, exposing Chicago's aggressive and unequal ticketing practices, combined with punitive collections measures, which have pushed tens of thousands of mostly black motorists into Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Since our reporting, the city of Chicago has dismissed some 23,000 outstanding duplicate vehicle tickets and will refund motorists who have already paid for an additional 12,000 duplicates. The Chicago City Council approved reforms including a program designed to help low-income motorists comply with the municipal requirement and to avoid costly citations, along with a measure to wipe away some ticket debt for motorists who file for bankruptcy under Chapter 7. Another more sweeping set of improvements has also been put forward and is awaiting consideration. The City Council also established a task force of officials from police, finance and other key city departments, as well as more than a half-dozen aldermen, community organizations and independent researchers, who are charged with reforming the city's practices and providing better oversight.

Polluting Military Practices Limited

In 2017, ProPublica revealed how the Pentagon's development and testing of weapons has polluted millions of acres of land and drinking water resources across 40,000 U.S. sites, with the Pentagon systematically ignoring or downplaying its cleanup responsibilities. Prompted by our investigation, the Department of Defense Inspector General launched an investigation into the military's practice of open burning and detonating hazardous explosive materials on its properties, as well as its frequent reliance on federal contractors to carry out that work. In addition, Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, a member of



Marjorie Madfis was among seven women in their 40s and 50s laid off from their IBM marketing team in White Plains, New York, in 2013. The two members who remained were younger men. (Demetrius Freeman for ProPublica)

the House Armed Services Committee, introduced an amendment to the defense spending bill requiring the Pentagon to end the outmoded and highly toxic practice of burning old munitions and other explosives in the open air. The bill passed in June.

Cases of Missing Children Revisited

In September, ProPublica published an investigation, in partnership with Newsday and “This American Life,” on nearly a dozen Latino families who came to the Suffolk County Police Department on Long Island asking about their teenage children who had disappeared. While the department ignored their concerns and labeled their children runaways, it turned out that many of the missing had been murdered by members of the gang MS-13. Within a week of publication, the police department announced that it will revisit cases in which families have alleged misconduct, and both of the detectives featured in our investigation are now under internal affairs review.

Illegal Uses of Presidential Seal Halted

In March, our “Trump, Inc.” podcast with WNYC reported that the Trump Organization had ordered dozens of golf tee markers emblazoned with the presidential seal, even though it’s illegal to use the seal for commercial purposes. The day after the story, the president’s company said it had removed the markers from its golf courses.

Age Discrimination Scrutinized

In March, ProPublica published an investigation into IBM’s practices of forcing older workers out of their jobs through retirement and layoffs, replacing them with younger employees and flouting laws intended to protect against age bias. In May, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission consolidated age discrimination complaints against the company from around the country, launching a nationwide investigation of age bias at IBM.

Longstanding Civil Rights Complaints Investigated

In December, ProPublica and the New York Times published an investigation into racial discrimination in Montana’s Wolf Point School District, where tribal leaders have long claimed that schools discipline Native American students more harshly than white students, shunt them into remedial programs without appropriate cause, and deny them special education evaluations and services. Despite receiving a detailed civil rights complaint filed by tribal leaders in June 2017, the U.S. Department of Education had failed to act. Hours after our story, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights said that it will investigate the complaint.

Campaign Contributions Limited

Last year, ProPublica, WNYC and the New Yorker reported that Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. had years earlier overruled prosecutors who wanted to bring felony fraud charges against Ivanka Trump and Donald Trump Jr. During the office’s investigation, in 2012, Vance met with Trump lawyer Marc Kasowitz, who had donated to Vance’s re-election campaign. Following the report, Vance said he would no longer take campaign donations from defense attorneys with cases before him and will cap donations from their law partners. He also will not solicit contributions personally and will have his campaign shield him from the identities of his donors.

Changes to FBI Crime Reporting Fast-Tracked and Local Police Department Audited

ProPublica partnered with Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting and Newsy for an investigation on local law enforcement’s widespread use of “exceptional clearances” to close rape cases with-

out actually resolving them. The story discovered a major flaw in the FBI’s crime reporting system, the National Incident-Based Reporting System, that did not require agencies to track cases classified as “unfounded,” a category for when police say the victim is lying or the reported crime didn’t occur. Calling our findings “a crisis, an emergency,” the chairman of the FBI’s NIBRS transition task force has expedited a process expected to change reporting rules and require police to disclose these cases. The story also prompted the Austin Police Department to request an independent audit by Texas officials, which found that Austin police had improperly cleared nearly a third of sexual assault cases from 2017, a misclassification that made the department’s rate of solving rape cases appear higher.

Effectiveness of Supported-Housing System Assessed

In an investigation with Frontline of a New York policy to move people out of institutions and into private apartments, we revealed that social workers felt pressured to move individuals even when they were not good candidates for living on their own. Lacking the structure of the institutions, it became much easier for individuals to slip through the cracks, with dangerous, dehumanizing and sometimes fatal results. The day after our report co-published in the New York Times, federal Judge Nicholas Garaufis, who originally approved the 2014 settlement that resulted in the supported-housing policy, ordered an independent report to assess the effectiveness of its incident reporting system, won a commitment from the state to examine its service-coordination program and suggested New York officials do more to help supported-housing residents learn and practice basic life skills.

Patient Privacy Defended

In December 2015, ProPublica reported on patients who had details of their mental health diagnoses and treatments exposed by a New Jersey psychology practice suing them over unpaid bills. In April 2017, the state attorney general’s office and the New Jersey State Board of Psychological Examiners filed a complaint against the psychologist, Barry Helfmann, for failing to protect patients’ confidentiality. This June, the state Board of Psychological Examiners moved to suspend his license for two years.



ProPublica’s Electionland reporting initiative revealed voters’ experiences in real time. (Erin Lefevre for ProPublica)

Electionland Tracked Voter Problems — and Got Results

Throughout 2018, ProPublica’s Electionland used data and technology to track issues that prevent voters from casting their ballots. The hope was to address those problems before the 2018 elections. The project had considerable impact:

- Days before the vote, ProPublica found that **the computer servers that powered Kentucky’s online voter registration and Wisconsin’s reporting of election results were susceptible to hacking.** Our analysis found that the insecure service run by Wisconsin could be reached from internet addresses based in Russia, while Kentucky’s was accessible from other Eastern European countries. After our inquiry, Wisconsin shut down its service, and shortly after the story ran, Kentucky appeared to do the same, making its server no longer accessible by the public.
- Responding to an Electionland tip, our partners at the Houston Chronicle reported on **voter registration issues at Prairie View A&M, a historically black university** in Waller County. Administrative errors were keeping hundreds of registered voters at the school from casting a ballot at the voting location on campus. In addition, the county was asking students to fill out forms to remedy the problem — a step advocates say could confuse students and keep them from voting. The Chronicle also documented that a Democratic campaign staffer complaining about the issue was briefly arrested after taking a photo of the



By covering voters' experiences during the 2018 election in real time, Electionland had considerable impact on issues that may have prevented voters from casting their ballots. (Erin Lefevre for ProPublica)

county clerk. After the stories, the Texas secretary of state's office stepped in and allowed Prairie View students to vote on campus without filling out additional paperwork.

■ A voter who had been booted from a polling location because she wore a T-shirt with the logo of a progressive Texas group reached out to Electionland. She told us that the Harris County clerk's office had sent a memo to **poll workers singling out three progressive groups for removal from the polls**. We shared the memo with the Houston Chronicle, which then called the clerk's office. Soon after, before the paper even had a chance to publish a story, the county rescinded the memo. The Texas secretary of state's office also later weighed in, advising the county against the prohibition.

■ We received **a slew of tips about Resistbot** — a texting service that reminds voters of their polling place and of early voting deadlines — when it notified

voters across Florida that early voting ended a day earlier than it really did. While counties in Florida are not required to keep polling places open the Sunday before the election, many do. After we passed the tip to a reporter at WLRN in Florida, he tweeted at Resistbot asking the organization to correct the error. It did, sending updated texts to voters in the affected areas.

■ During the New York gubernatorial primary in September, Electionland tracked down a tip that the **New York City Housing Authority instructed hundreds of residents in a Coney Island building to remain home** for a routine inspection on the day of primary elections. After a ProPublica reporter reached out to the agency, a spokesperson said the instructions were an oversight and rescinded them, also promising not to schedule inspections on Election Day.

■ Our partners at Bklyner and WNYC reported on an official New York City **voter guide that incorrectly stated felons can vote only after completing parole**. After the story, the agency updated its website, in addition to correcting a blog post from two years earlier that included the outdated information.

■ Tampa Bay Times, an Electionland partner, reported on a **New Port Richey polling site at a church whose pastor erected a sign outside reading "Don't vote for Democrats on Tuesday and sing 'Oh how I love Jesus' on Sunday."** While the Pasco County Supervisor of Elections Office said on Election Day that, despite hundreds of complaints, the sign could not be removed because it was on private property outside the 100-foot perimeter where campaigning isn't allowed, days later the church lost its status as a polling site because of the sign.

Recognition for Our Work

Our work was honored in 2018 as follows:

Our collaboration with NPR, on **the maternal mortality crisis in the U.S.**, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting. The series won the Peabody Award in the radio/podcast category; the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting; the George Polk Award for medical reporting; the Edward R. Murrow National Award for excellence in innovation; the National Association of Black Journalists' Salute to Excellence Award for digital interactive news story; the Sigma Delta Chi Award for excellence in journalism; the New York Academy of Medicine Health Equity Journalism Prize; a National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine Communication Award; the Deadline Club Award for public interest; and the Council on Contemporary Families Award for Outstanding Media Coverage of Family Issues. The series was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for public interest; the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for print/online; the Association of Health Care Journalists Award for print journalism; the Online Journalism Awards' Knight Award for Public Service; and the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation Research and Journalism Award for print journalism; and received honorable mention for the Molly National Journalism Prize.

"The Tax Divide," a series from ProPublica Illinois and the Chicago Tribune on the unfair property tax assessment system in Cook County, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting. The series won the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Busi-

ness and Financial Journalism in the local category; the Taylor Award for Fairness in Journalism; the National Headliner Award for news series in a daily newspaper; the Peter Lisagor Awards' Watchdog Award for excellence in public interest reporting; the Lisagor Award for best investigative reporting in a general interest daily newspaper, news service or news bureau; and the New York State Society of CPAs' Excellence in Financial Journalism Awards for public service and best local reporting; and was a finalist for the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Investigative Reporting.

The ProPublica and WNYC podcast **"Trump, Inc."** won an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award.

ProPublica won an Online Journalism Award for **general excellence in online journalism.**

Our series with NPR and the New Yorker, on how employers and insurance companies use threats of deportation to get out of paying **workers compensation for undocumented workers**, won the Molly National Journalism Prize; the James Aronson Award for Social Justice Journalism; the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Award for explanatory reporting; the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award in the radio/audio category; and the New York State Society of CPAs' Excellence in Financial Journalism Award for best general reporting; and was a finalist for the Deadline Award for beat reporting.

"Automating Hate," a collaboration with the New York Times and German news organizations that exposed discriminatory Facebook policies, won the



Some of the thousands of sites poisoned by the military's handling of munitions waste are in the middle of residential neighborhoods. (Ashley Gilbertson/VII Photo, special to ProPublica)

Society of American Business Editors and Writers Award in the technology category and the Gerald Loeb Award for beat reporting.

Our project with the Florida Times-Union, “**Walking While Black**,” on racial disparities in the enforcement of pedestrian violations in Jacksonville, Florida, won the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting; the Online Journalism Awards’ University of Florida Award for Investigative Data Journalism; the National Association of Black Journalists’ Salute to Excellence Award for online news project; the Paul Tobenkin Memorial Award; the Deadline Club Award for minority focus; and three awards in the Florida Society of News Editors contest for public service, community leadership and beat reporting.

“**Too Broke for Bankruptcy**,” our series on how the bankruptcy system routinely fails those it is meant to aid and particularly punishes poor black Americans, won the American Society of News Editors’ Dori J. Maynard Award for Justice in Journalism; the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Award for investigative reporting; and second place for the Philip Meyer Award for journalism using social science research methods. The series was also a finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award in the explanatory category and the Online News Association’s University of Florida Award for Investigative Data Journalism.

“**Bombs in Our Backyards**,” a series on how the U.S. military is the country’s most dangerous polluter, won the Society of Environmental Journalists’ Nina Mason Pulliam Award for Outstanding Environmental Reporting and SEJ’s Kevin Carmody Award for Outstanding In-depth Reporting; received honorable mention in the National Press Club’s Joan Friedenberg Online Journalism Award; was a silver winner in the Tokyo International Foto Awards; and was a finalist for the Deadline Club Award for science, technology, medical or environmental reporting.

The “**Trump Town**” news app, tracking ex-lobbyists and Washington insiders who have been appointed across the federal government, won the Online News Association’s Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award; the Society of Professional Journalists’ Sunshine Award; and the First Amendment Coalition’s Free Speech & Open Government Award; was a finalist for the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for freedom of information; and was recognized on the Data Journalism Awards shortlist.

“Wasted Medicine,” our series highlighting the hundreds of billions of dollars that the U.S. wastes each year on health care, won the Association of Health Care Journalists Award in the consumer/feature category and the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Award for health/science; and was a finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award for personal finance and the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation Research and Journalism Award for print journalism.

Our investigation with Fortune, **“The Billion-Dollar Loophole,”** on a popular charitable donation tax scheme that is being manipulated to make big profits, won the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Award for banking/finance.

Our story about **an MS-13 informant who risked his life to work with local police,** co-published with New York magazine, won an Online Journalism Award in the feature category. **“The Runaways,”** a collaboration with “This American Life” about how police neglected to investigate Latino teenagers victimized by the gang, won the October Sidney Award.

“The Failure Track,” our investigation on neglect and profiteering in alternative schools, won the National Award for Education Reporting for investigative reporting.

The ProPublica-led project **“Documenting Hate,”** a coalition of newsrooms reporting on hate crimes, won the Association of LGBTQ Journalists’ Al Neuharth Award of Innovation in Investigative Journalism and was a finalist for the Scripps Howard Award for Topic of the Year.

Our storytelling and **reporting on Twitter about the Trump administration** won the Edward R. Murrow Regional Award for Excellence in Social Media.

Our story on **foreigners receiving priority on liver transplant lists** with WVUE-TV New Orleans won an Edward R. Murrow Regional Award for Hard News.

A ProPublica Illinois and Chicago Tribune story on **how Chicago police skirt punishment within a failed disciplinary system** won two Peter Lisagor Awards, for best multimedia feature presentation and best multimedia collaboration, and was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for best political and government reporting.

Our collaboration with the Investigative Fund, **“Trashed: Inside the Deadly World of Private Garbage Collection,”** won the February Sidney Award.



Sara Hernandez’s son went missing in 2016 after being bullied by gangs at school, but police wrote off the missing teen as a runaway. (Natalie Keyssar, special to ProPublica)



Fred Steese, who was granted a full pardon by the Nevada Board of Pardons Commissioners, hugs his lawyer, Lisa Rasmussen. Steese spent 21 years in prison for a murder he didn't commit. (David Calvert for ProPublica)

Our investigation with Consumer Reports into **discriminatory auto insurance practices** won the Shorty Social Good Award for Best in Racial Equality.

Our story on **mental health care in Mississippi's criminal justice system** won the Deadline Club Award for newspaper or digital feature reporting and received honorable mention for the National Press Foundation Carolyn Mattingly Award for Mental Health Reporting.

"How the U.S. Triggered a Massacre in Mexico," a collaboration with National Geographic, was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for reporting.

Our investigation disclosing unseemly practices by the **family real estate business of Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner**, co-published with the New York Times Magazine, was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for reporting.

Our investigation into **age discrimination at IBM** won the Barlett & Steele Bronze Award.

Our interactive news game with WNYC on the **experiences of asylum seekers** was a finalist for the Online Journalism Award for excellence and innovation in visual digital storytelling.

A collaboration with the Texas Tribune on **federal land seizures** during the United States' first effort to build a border wall was a finalist for the Online News Association's University of Florida Award for Investigative Data Journalism.

"The Beleaguered Tenants of Kushnerville" received honorable mention for the John Bartlow Martin Award for Public Interest Magazine Journalism.

Our story exposing that thousands of **criminal cases in New York City relied on disputed DNA testing** techniques, co-published with the New York Times, was a finalist for the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting and the Deadline Club Award for local reporting.

Our series on **Alford pleas**, a little-known deal that allows defendants to maintain their innocence while at the same time pleading guilty, was a finalist for the Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism and the Deadline Club Award for public service.

ProPublica Illinois was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for **Best Start-Up**.

"How Chicago Gets its Guns," a collaboration with the Chicago Sun-Times and WBEZ, was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for best multimedia feature presentation.

The ProPublica Illinois post “**Downstate-of-Mind: Your Responses to Defining ‘Downstate’ Illinois**” was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for best individual blog post.

“**Stuck Kids**,” a ProPublica Illinois investigation revealing that hundreds of children in state care are held each year in psychiatric hospitals for weeks or months at a time, won third place in the Ruderman Foundation Awards for Excellence in Reporting on Disability.

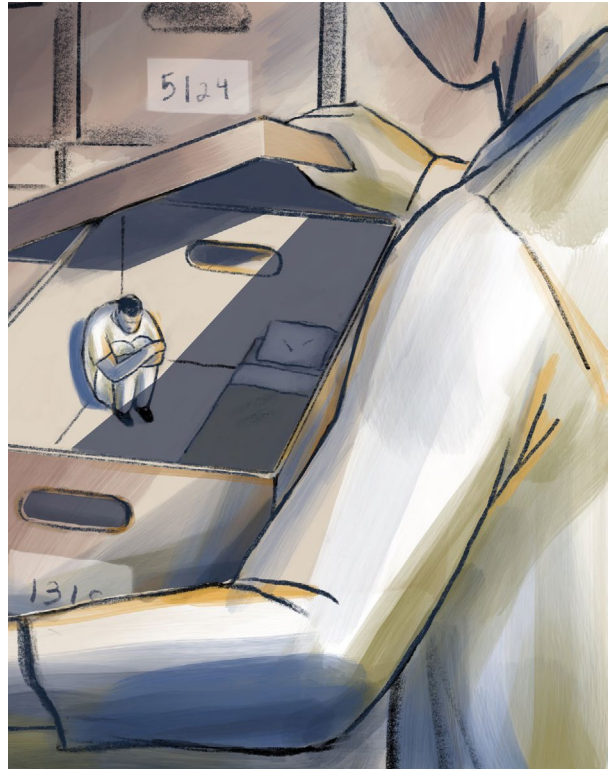
ProPublica senior editor Charles Ornstein was a finalist for Rock Health’s award for **Digital Health Reporter of the Year**.

ProPublica Illinois reporter Mick Dumke was a finalist for the **Chicago Journalist Association’s Dorothy Stock Award**.

Rachel Glickhouse, partner manager for ProPublica’s Documenting Hate project, was a finalist for the **Livingston Award for Young Journalists**.

Our “**Lost Cause**” maps, showing counties that supported losing presidential candidates, were included in the North American Cartographic Information Society’s Atlas of Design.

Our **news applications and data visualizations** won 35 Society for News Design Awards of Excellence for site redesign, design team portfolio, news apps portfolio, breaking news, features, graphics, social media graphics, and the individual portfolios of design director David Sleight, editorial experience designer Rob Weychert, and social visuals and graphics producer Lucas Waldron. News applications developer Lena V. Groeger won the Information is Beautiful Award for impressive individual portfolio, and “Bombs in Our Backyard” won a Tokyo International Foto Awards silver medal.



ProPublica Illinois reported that 21 percent of the time that youths in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services spent in psychiatric hospitals was not medically necessary. (Lydia Fu for ProPublica Illinois)

Overview of Distribution

To reach the widest possible audience, we have always made our work available for republication under a Creative Commons license, and we regularly co-publish major stories with leading news organizations.

59	Publishing partners in 2018	
3,600,000	Pageviews on ProPublica platforms per month on average	DOWN 8%
2,000,000	Off-platform pages viewed on Apple News, Microsoft News, Google News and SmartNews per month on average	UP 64%
295,000	Pages republished under Creative Commons per month on average	DOWN 25%
1,600,000	Unique visitors to ProPublica.org per month on average	DOWN 23%
131,000	Email subscribers	
774,000+	Twitter followers	UP 9%
402,000+	Facebook fans	UP 7%

Publishing Partners, 2018

ProPublica has had 184 publishing partners in 10 years. We choose each partner with an eye toward maximizing the impact of the story in question. Here is a list of our partners in 2018. New partners marked in **bold**:

- **Advocate (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)**
- **Alton (Illinois) Telegraph**
- **Association of Health Care Journalists**
- Atlantic
- Audible
- **Block Club Chicago**
- Bloomberg BusinessWeek
- **Charleston (West Virginia) Gazette-Mail**
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Chicago Tribune
- Chronicle of Higher Education
- Consumer Reports
- Fortune
- Florida Times-Union
- **Forward**
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- Houston Chronicle
- HuffPost
- **Journal Star (Peoria, Illinois)**
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- Stat
- **State Journal-Register (Springfield, Illinois)**
- **St. Louis Public Radio**
- Texas Monthly
- Texas Tribune
- Time
- Univision
- Vice News
- **Voice of America**
- Vox
- Washington Post
- WBEZ (Chicago)
- **WMFE (Orlando, Florida)**
- WNYC
- **Wondery**
- **WRAL-TV (Raleigh)**

Financial Information, 2018

Once again in 2018, year-end contributions to ProPublica were surprisingly robust. This allowed us to add to our cumulative reserve, which now exceeds \$25.5 million, approaching our goal of one year's projected expenses.

Revenues

Board of Directors contributions and related grants	\$5,606,000
Major grants and gifts (\$50,000 and above)	\$17,169,000
Online donations	\$3,097,000
Other grants and gifts	\$3,612,000
Earned income and interest	\$749,000
Total	\$30,233,000

Expenses

News salaries, payments and benefits	\$15,364,000
Non-news salaries and benefits	\$2,765,000
Personnel support	\$2,189,000
Outreach	\$1,190,000
Professional fees	\$235,000
Occupancy and office	\$1,477,000
Capital costs	\$319,000
Taxes	\$28,000
Total	\$23,567,000

Total donors: more than 29,000.

All figures preliminary and unaudited, rounded to the nearest \$1,000.

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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:

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Raymond Bonner, writer living in New York

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

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ProPublica Illinois has a Leadership Council, a group of community stakeholders who volunteer to help advance our newsroom, its mission and work.

Lee Clifford, freelance business editor and founder of Altruette.com

Kenneth Lehman, chairman emeritus, Fel-Pro Inc., chairman emeritus, Winning Workplaces

Bruce Sagan, chairman of the management committee of the Hyde Park Herald Newspaper, Chicago

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ProPublica's Data Advisory Board advises on developing quantitative methodologies, answers practical questions and introduces us to other domain experts.

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Foundation to Promote Open Society	Select Equity Group Foundation	Bruce Wintman & Jonna Gaberman
Polakof and Osher Charitable Family Fund	The Selz Foundation	The Wunderkinder Foundation
Park Foundation	Stephen M. Silberstein	Yellow Chair Foundation
	Deborah Simon	Zegar Family Foundation