

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and a green backpack, is sitting on a wooden bench. She is looking down and writing in a spiral-bound notebook with a green pen. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a thatched roof and greenery.

 PROPUBLICA

MAY-AUGUST 2019

# Report to Stakeholders

# A Growing Audience for Our Work

Since ProPublica launched in 2008, we've understood the importance of getting our stories in front of the widest possible audience to increase our chances for impact. Over the past 11 years, we've had over 190 publishing partners, and our work has appeared in hundreds of other print and online publications through our Creative Commons license, which makes most of our stories available to other publishers for free.

But the publishing landscape has changed dramatically over this time period, as budget cuts whittle away at both local and national news organizations, and third-party platforms continue to change how readers find and access journalism. It's become more important than ever for us to ensure that we can reach readers with stories that matter to them.

**Cover:** Reporter Lisa Song traveled to Brazil for her investigation examining how carbon credit plans for forest preservation have failed to bring any real, measurable change. (Fernando Martinho for ProPublica)



*ProPublica Illinois found that dozens of suburban Chicago families exploited a legal loophole to get their kids need-based financial aid. (Kristen Norman for ProPublica Illinois)*

In 2019, ProPublica has been working to expand our readership, and we now reach many more people, through more channels than we have in the past. More than half of the traffic to our stories now occurs on third-party platforms, such as Apple News and SmartNews, up from about a third in 2018.

Monthly visitors during the middle period of 2019 to our own website increased 49% over the prior year and we added more than 50,000 newsletter subscribers. July 2019 was our highest traffic month ever, both on and off our platform. That growth was driven by strong interest in a story — our most viewed ever — about a secret Facebook group where current and former Border Patrol agents were caught sharing vulgar and derogatory posts about migrants and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. A huge audience also read a report by ProPublica Illinois that revealed how some parents in wealthy Chicago suburbs were giving up legal custody of their kids to get need-based college financial aid.





*Our Local Reporting Network project with the Anchorage Daily News is investigating why places like Kiana, Alaska (above), have some of the highest rates of sexual assault in the country. (Loren Holmes/Anchorage Daily News)*

## Expanding the Reach of Our Journalism

On any given business day, we reach tens of thousands of people who are new to ProPublica. Over the past few years, we've drawn in new readers through smart, strategic storytelling on [Twitter](#) (now 806,000 followers), [Facebook](#) (now 434,000 followers) and other [social accounts](#), recognizing the importance of meeting people where they are.

In 2019, we've extended these efforts beyond social media. We've refined our approach to writing headlines that can help us find and engage new readers. We've used search engine optimization techniques to help us reach low-income tax filers with our investigation into the ways that Intuit, the maker of TurboTax, and other companies have worked against making tax preparation easier and less costly. And a deeper focus on how we package local investigations for national audiences has helped us bring wider attention to ProPublica Local Reporting Network investigations such as the Connecticut Mirror's report on housing segregation in that state, which is some of the worst in the country.

Apple News has been a particularly important platform for our work this year. In May, we launched an investigation with the Anchorage Daily News, a ProPublica Local Reporting Network partner, into sexual assault in Alaska. That reporting has uncovered disturbing levels of sexual abuse in Alaska's remote, rural villages. The initial stories in the series revealed that many communities, where the populations are primarily Alaska Native, often have no local law enforcement.

Since the series launched in May, the stories have earned more than 4.6 million page views on Apple News alone, where editors have featured the work prominently. The stories have also appeared on our website and the Anchorage Daily News website, and they were featured in a special section of the print newspaper.

This reach has helped drive both new reporting, with more than 300 survivors of sexual assault in Alaska responding to a related questionnaire, and impact. In June, U.S. Attorney General William Barr declared an emergency for public safety in rural Alaska and announced more than \$10 million in funds as part of a sweeping plan to better support law enforcement in Alaska Native villages.

## Establishing a Connection

In the middle period of 2019, we increased our efforts to promote newsletters with our readers, expanding the number and type of messages we publish through email and driving a growing number of subscriptions through both our own website and collaboration with our publishing partners.

Newsletters offer subscribers an easier way to stay connected to our work, whether they're interested in a digest of all of the stories we publish, alerts for our biggest stories, or behind the scenes looks at an individual investigation or our industry at large. In the past four months, we've launched new newsletters, including Not Shutting Up, a weekly note about the issues facing journalism and American democracy from ProPublica president Dick Tofel, and three pop-up newsletters focused on investigations from our Local Reporting Network partners in Sacramento, California; Louisville, Kentucky; and Mississippi. (You can find a complete list of our newsletters and subscribe at [propublica.org/newsletters](http://propublica.org/newsletters).)

Many of our new subscribers are interested in staying connected to reporting that they've helped contribute to. Our engagement team has been working to gather the stories of



*ProPublica and the Sacramento Bee, part of our Local Reporting Network, are spending the year looking into conditions in California's county jails. (Greg Betza, special to ProPublica)*

Navy service members, college financial aid applicants, sexual assault victims in Alaska, low-income tax filers, people with experience in California county jails, and many more.

With more than 100 full-time journalists and 21 Local Reporting Network partners, ProPublica is producing more investigative work than at any time in our history. Finding and engaging new audiences, particularly first-time readers, is crucial to maximizing the resonance and impact of our journalism. We're happy to report that we're making progress.

## RIP, Herbert M. Sandler, 1931–2019

On June 4, we lost Herb Sandler who, along with his late wife Marion, had provided the inspiration and most of the funds to launch ProPublica.

Herb served as the chairman of our Board from 2007 until the end of 2016, and remained a very active member of the Board, and our leading cheerleader, until his death.

We miss him terribly.

As we said in our [public tribute](#) at the time of his passing, Herb was drawn to investigative

journalism out of a passion he always summed up the same way: "I hate it when the bad guys win." We will continue to pay tribute to Herb with work that brings "moral force" — another favorite phrase of his — to bear in exposing abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust, with the aim of the good guys prevailing more often.

Among the good guys supporting journalism, Herb Sandler was one of the best.

# Impact

The most important test of ProPublica is whether our work is having impact. We measure that impact not in terms of audience size or honors, but in real-world change. In the middle period of 2019, our journalism spurred such change in a number of important areas.

## **Congress Scraps Free File Provision**

In April, ProPublica drew attention to a provision in the Taxpayer First Act that would permanently bar the IRS from creating a free electronic tax filing system, a move that Intuit, H&R Block and other tax software companies have spent millions of dollars in lobbying to ensure. Later that month, we showed how TurboTax uses deceptive design, misleading ads, and technical tricks to get people to pay to file their taxes, even when they are eligible to file for free. Several senators called for refunds and investigations of five tax software companies' efforts to hide their truly free filing options from search engines. In May, the IRS and its inspector general announced an investigation into the agency's Free File partnership with the tax prep industry. The New York Department of Financial Services launched its own investigation into Intuit, H&R Block and two other tax prep companies. The Los Angeles city attorney also filed a lawsuit against Intuit and H&R Block. In June, amid growing public outcry from our investigation, the House and Senate passed a new version of the Taxpayer First Act that removed the industry-backed Free File provision.

## **Chicago Mayor Moves to End City's Punitive Ticketing Practices**

In 2018, a ProPublica Illinois and WBEZ investigation showed that the city of Chicago uses aggressive ticketing practices to boost



*Our reporting detailed how Intuit, the maker of TurboTax, has used deceptive marketing tactics to trick customers into paying for its tax prep services, even when they're eligible to file for free. (Richard Borge, special to ProPublica)*

revenue, disproportionately targeting poor, minority residents and trapping them in spiraling debt. The city's punitive collection measures, including booting and impounding vehicles or suspending driver's licenses as a way to pressure debtors to pay their tickets, have pushed tens of thousands of mostly black motorists into Chapter 13 bankruptcy. In response to our reporting, a federal appeals court ruled that the city of Chicago can no longer hold impounded cars after drivers file for bankruptcy. And in July, Mayor Lori Lightfoot introduced a series of proposals to reform the city's broken ticketing system, including no longer allowing license suspensions over unpaid parking tickets and making city payment plans more affordable.



## **Troubled Charity More Than Me Shuts Down**

Last year, in partnership with Time magazine, ProPublica launched an investigation into an acclaimed American charity called More Than Me operating in Liberia. It revealed how the organization missed key opportunities to prevent the rape of girls in its care by senior staff member Macintosh Johnson, misled donors and the public about the extent of the abuse and failed to ensure all of his potential victims were tested after it came to light he had AIDS when he died. In May, the nonprofit's U.S. board released an independent report that echoed our findings, identifying significant deficits in More Than Me's policies, governance and administration and strongly criticizing the actions of founder and ex-CEO Katie Meyler, who had resigned in April. In June, a panel of Liberian civil society leaders headed by a prominent local lawyer also published an independent report calling out More Than Me's American board for an "astonishing failure of oversight." Later that month, More Than Me shuttered its operations, citing "severe financial pressure due to our inability to fundraise."

## **Nonprofit Hospital Stops Suing Its Own Employees**

MLK50, a member of our Local Reporting Network, partnered with ProPublica for an investigation into Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare, the largest hospital system in Memphis, and how it has sued and garnished the wages of thousands of its poorest patients, including its own employees, for unpaid medical bills. As a nonprofit, Methodist pays virtually no local, state or federal income tax and in return is supposed to provide community benefits. But its financial assistance policy all but ignores patients with any form of health insurance, no matter their out-of-pocket costs. Its health plan also doesn't allow Methodist employees to seek care at hospitals with more generous financial assistance policies. Prompted by our reporting, Methodist's CEO promised a 30-day review of its collection policy and suspended court collection activities over unpaid medical bills during that period, immediately dropping more than two dozen cases that were set for initial hearings. Once the review was completed



*More Than Me, an American charity with 19 schools in Liberia, closed its operations in the wake of a ProPublica investigation into the rapes of girls in its care. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)*

at the end of July, Methodist announced a broad range of reforms, including that it would raise its minimum wage, dramatically expand its financial assistance policy for hospital care and stop suing its own employees for unpaid medical debts.

## **Border Patrol Launches Internal Investigations**

In July, ProPublica uncovered a secret Facebook group where current and former Border Patrol agents were caught sharing vulgar and derogatory posts, including jokes about migrant deaths and depictions of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez being sexually assaulted. In response to our story, U.S. Customs and Border Protection informed investigators with the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and opened an inquiry. The agency also placed several employees on restricted duty and issued letters to those confirmed as being active in the Facebook group, instructing them to stop posting objectionable material. Within weeks, top CBP officials announced the agency had opened investigations into 70 individuals, including 62 current and eight former employees, with connections to the group.

## **Federal Officials Work to Close Student Aid Loopholes**

ProPublica Illinois was the first to report that dozens of well-off parents are giving up custody of their children to access need-based



*In Stebbins, Alaska, every cop has a criminal record, including the chief. The U.S. Department of Justice recently labeled the lack of law enforcement in rural Alaska a federal emergency. (Bill Roth/Anchorage Daily News)*

scholarships and college financial aid that they wouldn't be eligible for otherwise. Shortly after we published, the U.S. Department of Education's inspector general said it wants to close this legal loophole and recommended modifying the language on federal financial aid forms; Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker vowed to root out parents who are scamming the system and directed his staff to further investigate the issue. The University of Missouri started examining its students, saying it will pull financial aid from anyone caught exploiting guardianship for their own personal gain. Members of the Illinois House Higher Education Committee and House Appropriations-Higher Education Committee also held hearings on the scandal.

### **Three White Supremacists Sentenced to Prison**

In 2018, ProPublica and PBS Frontline published a series of investigations, including two full-length documentaries, identifying some of the most violent figures within America's resurgent white supremacist movement and their involvement in the deadly 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. In May, four members or associates of the hate group Rise Above Movement pleaded guilty to federal charges for their role in the violence. By July, three of the men were sentenced to more than

two years in prison. The fourth man will be sentenced separately.

### **Rhode Island Moves to Certify 911 Call Takers in CPR**

ProPublica's Local Reporting Network series with The Public's Radio is examining Rhode Island's 911 system and how a lack of training and resources has left operators ill-prepared for the most urgent medical emergencies, including cardiac arrest. Unlike every other New England state, Rhode Island doesn't require its 911 operators to be trained in how to provide CPR instructions by phone — a crucial step that can potentially prevent hundreds of unnecessary deaths each year. In response to our investigation, Rhode Island's legislature increased the training budget for 911 call takers to certify them in emergency medical dispatch and to collect data tracking their performance.

### **Millions Allocated to Improve Alaska Public Safety**

The Anchorage Daily News, a member of the ProPublica Local Reporting Network, is partnering with us for a project that has uncovered disturbing levels of sexual abuse in Alaska's remote, rural villages. Almost all of these communities are primarily Alaska Native and often have no local law enforcement. In the wake of our investigation, U.S. Attorney General William Barr visited Alaska to learn more about the problems highlighted in our report. In June, he declared an emergency for public safety in rural Alaska and announced more than \$10 million in funds as part of a sweeping plan to better support law enforcement in Alaska Native villages.

### **Senators Propose Crackdown on Benefits Brokers**

A ProPublica investigation in February detailed how health insurers provide lucrative commissions and gifts to brokers, the middlemen that help companies select employee benefits, and showed how these hidden side deals indirectly increase the cost of health plans. In May, Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and Sen.



Patty Murray, D-Wash., leaders of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, included new requirements for brokers in their draft bill, the Lower Health Care Costs Act. The proposal would specifically force brokers to reveal compensation they've received from insurers and other vendors, in writing, at the time an employer signs up for benefits.

### **Tax Breaks Put on Hold**

In our Local Reporting Network investigation with WNYC, we are highlighting how companies and others connected to George Norcross, the most powerful unelected official in New Jersey, have raked in at least \$1.1 billion in tax incentives thanks to state legislation that Norcross was instrumental in getting passed in 2013. In June, state officials froze a \$260 million tax break for one project from Holtec International pending investigation of inaccuracies in its application.

### **Texas Legislators Create Task Force on Sexual Assault**

In November 2018, ProPublica — in partnership with Newsy and Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting — examined how the Austin Police Department and dozens of other law enforcement agencies across the country use what's known as "exceptional clearance" to close a significant share of their rape cases without actually solving them. By early May, the Texas House of Representatives unanimously voted to create the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force, bringing money and support at the highest levels of state government to reform how rapes are tracked, investigated and prosecuted across Texas. The lead sponsor of the bipartisan measure credited the series for spurring Texas lawmakers to act.

### **Facebook Limits Discriminatory Ads, New York Investigates**

In 2016, ProPublica was the first to report on how Facebook's targeted advertising tools can be used to buy credit, housing and employment ads that discriminate against users based on sensitive factors, including their race and



*An ambitious housing program promised a better life for thousands of New Yorkers with severe mental illness. But ProPublica and Frontline found cases with deadly consequences. (George Etheredge, special to ProPublica)*

gender, which is prohibited by federal law. In a civil rights audit released in July, Facebook pledged to create a new portal specifically for advertisers buying housing, employment and credit ads that would limit the options available and remove more than 5,000 categories related to protected groups of people. New York's Department of Financial Services also launched its own investigation into Facebook and whether state-regulated advertisers are using the platform to discriminate.

### **Judge Orders Expanded Oversight for Mentally Ill New Yorkers**

Last December, ProPublica and PBS Frontline investigated how a New York policy to move people with mental illness out of institutions and into private apartments has proven perilous and sometimes even deadly for the city's most vulnerable. The story prompted U.S. District Judge Nicholas Garaufis to commission a report from Clarence Sundram, the independent court monitor assigned to oversee the transition to supported housing. In July, the findings were released and revealed a number of shortcomings, including lengthy delays in filing incident reports and an overall failure by the state to sufficiently investigate problems and share results. Most notably, Sundram found that the incident reporting system meant to safeguard residents only tracked a fraction of them and only through their first six months in supported housing, even though serious incidents often occur well after that period. Garaufis has since



*Michael Holick, a renowned scientist turned expert witness, relies on his own controversial theory to help alleged abusers avoid prison and regain custody of the babies they were accused of harming. (M. Scott Brauer, special to ProPublica)*

demanded that the incident reporting system be expanded and that government officials present a plan in September to improve oversight.

### **Settlement Reached With Chinese Drywall Maker**

In 2010, ProPublica and the Sarasota Herald-Tribune investigated how companies had used tainted Chinese-made drywall in nearly 7,000 homes across the U.S. — and imported enough of the material to be used in at least 100,000 houses — despite concerns that the drywall was defective and gave off sulfur fumes capable of corroding wiring, damaging appliances and even contributing to serious respiratory problems. In August, a proposed \$248 million settlement was filed between property owners and Taishan Gypsum Co., the drywall maker.

### **Closer Scrutiny Applied to Use of Carbon Credits for Forest Preservation**

A ProPublica story published in May uncovered mounting evidence that using carbon credits for forest preservation has failed to produce the promised climate benefits. In June, a senior official at the United Nations said ProPublica’s findings influenced the UN’s news release questioning the use of carbon offsets, an environmental strategy the UN had long supported. Later that month, while greenlighting a plan that could lead to the

widespread use of forest preservation offsets in California, state legislators cautioned regulators on California’s Air Resources Board to conduct “vigorous and proactive monitoring” to ensure emissions cuts, in recognition of what we found in our reporting.

### **FDA Warns Company to Stop Marketing Unproven Stem Cell Treatments**

ProPublica’s story, “The Birth-Tissue Profiteers,” co-published with the New Yorker, highlighted how unproven stem cell therapies have exploded into a burgeoning \$2-billion global business, thanks in part to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s approach in regulating the industry. Following publication, the agency sent a letter to David Greene, the key figure in our report, warning him that the unapproved stem cell products marketed by his network of clinics are considered drugs and require FDA approval in order to be sold legally.

### **Hospital Reports Child Abuse Skeptic to State Medical Board**

Last September, ProPublica and the New Yorker published an in-depth profile on Dr. Michael Holick, a renowned scientist turned expert witness who has helped alleged child abusers avoid prison and even regain custody of the babies they were accused of harming by attributing the infant’s injuries to a rare genetic condition. Over the course of seven years, Holick has consulted or testified in more than 300 child abuse cases and repeatedly pointed to Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, even though the condition only occurs, at most, in 0.02% of the population. In the wake of the article, Boston Medical Center, where Holick practices, notified the Massachusetts medical board of earlier disciplinary action it had taken against him. His profile page on the board’s website now alerts members of the public of his restricted privileges.

*Additional examples of what we mean can be found at <http://www.propublica.org/impact>, as can a white paper on how ProPublica thinks about impact and related questions.*

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CONNECTICUT PART ONE OF TWO

Wealthy towns separated by design

High-income areas across the state build invisible walls to block housing and the people who need it

By Jacqueline Rabe Thomas

WESTPORT — A dirt field overgrown with weeds in the inconspicuous entrance to one of America's wealthiest towns, a short walk to a Belden Drive-like stretch replete with upscale stores

towns, a short walk to a Belden Drive-like stretch replete with upscale stores such as Tiffany & Co. But this neat patch of land is also the physical manifestation of a broader turf war over what type of housing — and ultimately what type of people — to allow within Westport's borders.

WESTPORT — A dirt field overgrown with weeds in the inconspicuous entrance to one of America's wealthiest towns, a short walk to a Belden Drive-like stretch replete with upscale stores

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GREENWICH TIME

WWW.GREENWICHTIME.COM | Wednesday, May 29, 2019 | Since 1872 | \$1.00

SEPARATION BY DESIGN

How Connecticut's richest towns fight affordable housing

By Jacqueline Rabe Thomas

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In May, ProPublica's investigation with the Connecticut Mirror, part of our Local Reporting Network, was featured on the front pages of nine of Connecticut's local newspapers. The piece detailed how the state is home to some of the worst housing segregation in the country.

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# Honors

Most journalism awards are bestowed in the first months of the year, when ProPublica was honored with its fifth Pulitzer Prize. Honors received in the middle period of 2019 included the following:

ProPublica's Pulitzer Prize-winning **"Trapped in Gangland"** also won this year's MOLLY National Journalism Prize; both EWA's National Award for Education Reporting in the feature stories category and its overall top honor, the Fred M. Hechinger Grand Prize for Distinguished Education Reporting; the Society of Professional Journalists' Ethics in Journalism Award; and was recognized as a finalist for the Morley Safer Award for Outstanding Reporting. The project — a collaboration with New York magazine, Newsday, This American Life and New York Times Magazine — detailed how President Trump's bungled crackdown on the Central American gang MS-13 burned informants, deported young immigrants suspected of gang involvement on flimsy evidence and failed to prevent further murders. Reporter Hannah Dreier was recognized as a finalist for the Michael Kelly Award as well as the Livingston Award in local reporting for her work on the series.

Our investigation on **age discrimination in the workplace** won a Gerald Loeb Award in beat reporting. The project uncovered how IBM had eliminated more than 20,000 of its American employees ages 40 and over in the last five years, and it showed that the company's tactics were pervasive throughout the U.S. labor market.

ProPublica and PBS Frontline's collaboration **"Documenting Hate"** has been nominated for two News & Documentary Emmy Awards in



*Our reporting on IBM found that the once-dominant tech company has cut tens of thousands of U.S. workers, hitting its most senior employees hardest. (Richard Borge, special to ProPublica)*

Outstanding Investigative Documentary and Outstanding Writing. The two-part film special investigated the violent white supremacists and neo-Nazis involved in the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, exposing the widespread governmental failure to curb the criminal activities of dangerous white power groups.

**"Case Cleared: How Rape Goes Unpunished in America,"** a joint ProPublica, Newsy and Reveal series, has been nominated for a News & Documentary Emmy Award in Outstanding Investigative Report in a Newsmagazine and is a finalist for the Online News Association's Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award. The project uncovered how police departments across the country are using



*ProPublica's Electionland project brought together more than 120 local and national newsrooms around the country to cover voting access, cybersecurity and election integrity in the 2018 midterm elections. (Erin Lefevre for ProPublica)*

a designation called “exceptional clearance” to make it seem as though they’ve solved a significant number of rape cases when they’ve simply closed them without actually arresting a suspect. The little-known category is designed to be used sparingly, but the reporting showed how law enforcement agencies have grown to depend on exceptional clearance to improve their public image.

ProPublica’s **“Flood Thy Neighbor”** series in partnership with Reveal and Vox won the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine’s Communication Award in the online category and is a finalist for ONA’s Online Journalism Award in excellence and innovation in visual digital storytelling. The project documents how the U.S. has long built levees to protect communities from floods despite their devastating, and counterintuitive, ability to raise flood risks for neighboring towns. The interactive from the series, **“To See How Levees Increase Flooding, We Built Our Own,”** allowed users to test different levee

scenarios and see firsthand how they can make flooding worse. It was named a finalist for a GEN Data Journalism Award for data visualization of the year.

**“Unprotected,”** ProPublica’s collaboration with Time magazine, won the Edward R. Murrow Award for best news documentary in the small digital news organization division and was a finalist for a Gerald Loeb Award in the video category. The project explored how the American charity More Than Me pledged to save some of Liberia’s most vulnerable girls from sexual exploitation — gaining international plaudits and millions of dollars in donations in the process. But from the beginning, girls as young as 10 were being raped by one of the nonprofit’s key leaders. The charity then misled donors and the public about what happened and failed to safeguard all the perpetrator’s possible victims even once they knew he had AIDS when he died. Reporter Finlay Young was named a finalist for the Livingston Award in international reporting for his work on the



*Our reporting on how the health insurance industry gives lucrative commissions and bonuses to the independent brokers who advise employers has led to new proposed legislation disclosing these payments. (Justin Volz, special to ProPublica)*

series and, with photojournalist Kathleen Flynn, received an honorable mention from the judges for the James Foley Medill Medal for Courage in Journalism.

ProPublica's **"Zero Tolerance"** audio from inside an immigrant detention center won an Edward R. Murrow Award in excellence in sound. The secret recording captured the unmistakable cries of children begging for their parents after being separated from their families at the Mexican border.

**"I Don't Want to Shoot You, Brother,"** ProPublica's multimedia report with the Frontline Dispatch, won NABJ's Salute to Excellence Award in the Digital Media – Single Story: Feature category. The piece wrestled with

the complicated, fraught question at the heart of so many police shootings: Does the lethal option have to be the only one?

Our reporting on **how President Trump has undermined the health and safety of veterans** by shifting their medical care to the private sector and letting his cronies meddle with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs won the National Press Club's Sandy Hume Award for Excellence in Political Journalism.

**"The Billion-Dollar Loophole,"** our co-published report with Fortune, won the National Press Club's Lee Walczak Award for Political Analysis. The piece detailed how conservation easements, the most generous charitable tax deduction in the federal tax code, have been



manipulated by wealthy investors to make enormous profits, yet Congress has failed to rein in the abuse.

Jessica Huseman, ProPublica's lead reporter on our **Electionland** project covering the 2018 midterms, was named a winner of the Society of Professional Journalists' Sunshine Award, which honors contributions to open government. The investigation was also named a finalist for ONA's Online Journalism Awards in the excellence in collaboration and partnerships category.

**"Driven Into Debt,"** a ProPublica Illinois collaboration with WBEZ, won two of the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards in best investigative reporting and best data journalism. The project, which was also a finalist for NABJ's Salute to Excellence Awards, revealed how Chicago's punitive and unequal ticketing practices have sent thousands of mostly black motorists into debt and bankruptcy.

ProPublica's investigation with PBS Frontline, **"Right to Fail,"** won the Deadline Club Award in newspaper or digital local news reporting. The series and full-length documentary looked into New York's ambitious effort to transition hundreds of people with mental illness from group homes to their own supported housing apartments, a move that has sometimes proven perilous, even deadly.

**"Sloan Kettering Cancer Center's Crisis,"** a collaboration with the New York Times, won the Deadline Club Award in business investigative reporting. The series was also a finalist for a Gerald Loeb Award in local reporting.

**"Trump, Inc.,"** ProPublica and WNYC's project, exploring the mysteries of the president's businesses — what deals are happening and who might be profiting from his administration — won first place in the Public Radio News Directors Incorporated's 2019 Awards in best collaborative effort. The joint podcast was also selected as a finalist for a Gerald Loeb Award in the audio category.

ProPublica Illinois' column, **"Politico-IL Insider,"** which analyzes the state's key political issues and personalities won two of the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards in best individual blog post and best continuing blog.

ProPublica Illinois' multimedia report **"We will keep on fighting for him,"** won the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award in best feature story. The investigative narrative documented the impact of a troubling clinical drug trial for children with bipolar disorder told through a mother's journal entries and present-day annotations from her and her son.

ProPublica and the Houston Chronicle's **"Heart Failure"** investigation on the rapid and dangerous decline of one of the nation's most renowned heart transplant programs won a Showcase Silver Award from the Headliners Foundation of Texas.

**"Louisiana's Ethical Swamp,"** our Local Reporting Network series with the Advocate, won the Louisiana Press Association's Gibbs Adams Award for best investigative reporting.

ProPublica and the Charleston Gazette-Mail's Local Reporting Network project **"The New Power Brokers"** was recognized with four awards from the West Virginia Press Association's annual editorial contest. **"Powerless,"** a multimedia piece from the series, was also named a finalist for ONA's Online Journalism Awards in the explanatory reporting category.

Our Local Reporting Network project with the Southern Illinoisan, **"HUD's House of Cards,"** won first place in the Illinois Press Association Awards in investigative reporting and second place in enterprise series. Reporter Molly Parker's ongoing work on the topic also won the Illinois Press Association's Knight Chair Award for Sustained Investigative Journalism.

**ProPublica** was named a finalist for ONA's Online Journalism Award in general excellence, medium newsroom. Al Shaw, a news applications developer for ProPublica, was a finalist for the GEN Data Journalism Award for best individual portfolio. And ProPublica's news applications department as a whole was also recognized as a finalist for the GEN competition's best data journalism team portfolio (large newsroom).

**"Health Insurance Hustle,"** ProPublica's series on how the industry uses side deals and hidden incentives to game their profits — often resulting in higher costs, delays in care or denials of treatment — was a finalist for the



*An ambitious U.S. law designed to curb global warming has instead led to the slashing and burning of tropical rainforests in Indonesia, releasing more carbon in one year than the annual emissions of all of Europe. (Ashley Gilbertson/VII Photo, for ProPublica)*

Gerald Loeb Award in explanatory reporting and received an honorable mention from the National Press Club Awards in the Consumer Journalism - Periodicals category.

Our collaboration with the New York Times Magazine, **“Fuel to the Fire,”** was named a finalist for the John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism and received an honorable mention from the Society of Environmental Journalists Awards in the outstanding feature story category. The groundbreaking expose showcased the impact of the palm oil trade, a climate catastrophe wrought by well-meaning but mistaken U.S. policymakers.

ProPublica’s Derek Kravitz, Al Shaw, Claire Perlman and Alex Mierjeski were finalists for the Livingston Award in national reporting for their work on **“Trump Town,”** an investigative series and searchable database that offered the first comprehensive look at the president’s political appointees, along with their federal lobbying and financial records.

ProPublica Illinois’ **“Stuck Kids”** series was named a finalist for ONA’s Online Journalism

Award in the feature, small newsroom category. The reporting detailed the plight of hundreds of Illinois children who had been left to languish in psychiatric hospitals long after they were cleared for release.

**“Blood Will Tell,”** a joint investigation with the New York Times Magazine, received an honorable mention for the MOLLY National Journalism Prize. The series examined how bloodstain-pattern analysis, and the experts who specialize in it, have helped prosecutors secure convictions across the country despite its short and troubled history as a forensic discipline.

ProPublica’s **“Miseducation”** project tracking civil rights issues in schools across the country was a finalist for the GEN Data Journalism Award for investigation of the year. The series, which came to include a first-of-its-kind database examining racial disparities in educational opportunities and school discipline, was also a finalist for NABJ’s Salute to Excellence Award in the Digital Media – Online Project: News category.

# ProPublica Partners May-August 2019

- ABC News
- Advocate [Baton Rouge, LA]
- AL.com
- **American Banker**
- **Anchorage Daily News**
- Baltimore Sun
- Boston Globe
- **Capital Gazette** [Annapolis, MD]
- CBS News
- Charleston [WV] Gazette-Mail
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Clarion-Ledger [Jackson, MS]
- Commercial Appeal [Memphis, TN]
- **Connecticut Mirror**
- Courier Journal [Louisville, KY]
- Fortune
- Frontline
- Guardian
- Houston Chronicle
- Miami Herald
- **Military Times**
- **Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting**
- **MLK50** [Memphis, TN]
- New York Times
- New Yorker
- Newsy
- **NPR Illinois**
- NPR News
- Philadelphia Inquirer
- Planet Money
- Politico
- The Public's Radio [Rhode Island]
- Reveal
- Sacramento Bee
- South Bend Tribune
- Star-Ledger [NJ]
- Stat
- **The Trace**
- Vox
- WBEZ
- Wired
- WNYC

*New partners marked in **bold**.*

## By the Numbers, May-August 2019

<b>5.1 MILLION</b>	Page views on ProPublica platforms per month on average:	UP 37% VS. 2018
<b>5.6 MILLION</b>	Off-platform pages viewed on MSN, Apple News, Google Play Newsstand, and SmartNews per month on average	UP 169% VS. 2018
<b>408,000</b>	Pages republished under Creative Commons per month on average	DOWN 4% VS. 2018
<b>2.6 MILLION</b>	Unique visitors to ProPublica.org per month on average	UP 49% VS. 2018
<b>193,000</b>	Email subscribers	UP 38% SINCE APRIL 2019
<b>806,000</b>	Twitter followers	UP 2% SINCE APRIL 2019
<b>434,000</b>	Facebook fans	UP 2% SINCE APRIL 2019