



P PROPUBLICA

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

The Next Frontier Is Local



ProPublica staff reacts to our receiving the Pulitzer gold medal for Public Service, April 10, 2017. (Demetrius Freeman for ProPublica)

Highlights of the Year at ProPublica

Impact

2017 was a dramatic year for real-world change spurred by our work. ProPublica's journalism fueled reform across the U.S., including the halting of several Facebook practices that facilitated racial discrimination and hate speech; the full pardon of a wrongfully convicted man; steps to address government conflicts of interest, from resignations to congressional calls for oversight; the passage of the nation's first law to tackle algorithmic discrimination; and legal protection of workers' comp benefits for undocumented immigrants.

Memorable stories

Our work unmasked secretive deregulation teams with industry ties that President Donald Trump installed across the federal government, and told heartbreaking stories of the maternal mortality crisis in the U.S. We revealed abusive federal land seizures in the building of a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border and bankruptcy practices that have kept generations of African Americans in debt. Our reporting unearthed the tragic story of a drug cartel's deadly assault on a Mexican town (and the failed DEA operation that triggered it) and spotlighted communities nationwide contaminated with toxic waste from military operations.

Cover: ProPublica Illinois reporter Duaa Eldeib, left, interviews a public defender in Harrisburg, Illinois, where almost a dozen young men now face sentences in adult prison. (Nick Schnelle for ProPublica Illinois)



ProPublica Illinois, our first regional publishing operation, launched with a dedicated staff in October. (Scott Klein)

Local focus

As local accountability journalism continues to decline, ProPublica sought to address this problem with two major initiatives. ProPublica Illinois, our first regional publishing operation, launched with a dedicated staff and a focus on exposing wrongdoing across the state, from gun trafficking enforcement in Chicago to abuses at youth prisons in Southern Illinois. As we have done nationally, ProPublica Illinois is sharing resources with other media organizations in support of the broader community of investigative journalists and engaged citizens. We also created the ProPublica Local Reporting Network, which will support investigative journalism at seven local news organizations, beginning in 2018.

Award winning

ProPublica, in partnership with the New York Daily News, received the Pulitzer gold medal for Public Service — widely considered the highest honor in American journalism, and the fourth Pulitzer for ProPublica — for our joint investigation on abuses in the New York City Police Department’s enforcement of nuisance abatement laws. In addition, our [“Machine Bias”](#) series was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting. Among other honors in 2017, we received two Peabody Awards, for [“Hell and High Water”](#) with the Texas Tribune, and [“Anatomy of Doubt”](#) with This American Life and The Marshall Project, and [Alec MacGillis’ work on politics](#) was honored with a George Polk Award for national reporting.



*Reporter Jeff Larson, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for our “Machine Bias” series, at ProPublica’s New York office.
(Demetrius Freeman for ProPublica)*

Partnerships

Our publishing platform and audience continued to grow, propelled by the strength of our more than 150 strategic publishing partnerships. In 2017 alone, we worked with 46 partners, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, NPR News, the Atlantic, the New Yorker, Consumer Reports, National Geographic and New York magazine.

Growing platform

ProPublica is both reaching larger audiences and targeting specific communities to help us report the news and spur change. Monthly average page views on our own platforms rose 50 percent to 3.9 million, while unique visitors climbed 89 percent to 2.1 million. ProPublica’s Facebook fans were up 76 percent to more than 374,000, while Twitter followers rose 51 percent to more than 712,000.

Business breakthrough

Readers power our investigative journalism — not big corporations, politicians or advocacy groups — and the vastly increased pace of giving that began after the 2016 election continued. In 2017, more than 34,000 smaller donors accounted for 17 percent of ProPublica’s revenue, vastly more than any single donor. This surge allowed us to increase our staff to more than 100 people and set a 2018 budget 50 percent higher than the initial budget for 2017. It also fueled the very significant expansion of our operating reserves, contributing to the sustainability of ProPublica while setting the stage for further growth and holding the powerful to account for years to come.

The Next Frontier Is Local

When ProPublica began publishing in 2008, we were driven by a mission to fill some of the gaps left by the business crisis of the press and the hollowing out of investigative journalism. We sought to build a new, sustainable model to carry forward this vital work.

Nearly ten years later, ProPublica has investigated a wide range of national and local issues, shining a light on abuses of power and betrayals of public trust wherever we find them. In a time of heightened disinformation and attacks on the press, our work has never been more important. Yet it has not been lost on us that the greatest diminution of accountability reporting is occurring at the local and regional level.

In 2017, ProPublica worked aggressively to address this problem. We launched two new initiatives — ProPublica Illinois and the ProPublica Local Reporting Network — to support local accountability journalism by and for the communities it covers.

Welcome ProPublica Illinois

Local reporters are uniquely positioned to tackle issues that are important to the communities they serve. To bring such sustained attention to Illinois — a state with a wealth of subjects for investigative journalism, but with more stories to uncover than there are reporters to dig into them — we started ProPublica Illinois, our first regional publishing operation with, we hope, more to come.

In February, we named Louise Kiernan as the editor-in-chief of ProPublica Illinois. Today, with a dedicated staff of 12, the Chicago-based newsroom investigates wrongdoing across the city and state. ProPublica Illinois also collaborates with other news organizations to build a broader community of investigative journalists, from partnerships with a diverse group of local newsrooms to a grant project with the Illinois Humanities Council focused on reaching underserved audiences.

One of ProPublica Illinois' first stories, published in partnership with the Chicago Tribune, shed light on a complex, specialized issue, but one of deep concern for many Chicago residents: property taxes. For decades, Cook County residents had suspected their property taxes were based on inaccurate assessments, overvaluing many low-priced homes while undervaluing many higher priced ones. ProPublica Illinois reporters Jason Grotto and Sandhya Kambhampati dug into the story, [exposing widespread inequities and egregious errors in assessments](#) which give the wealthy unsanctioned tax breaks and line the pockets of politically connected tax attorneys.

Thanks to this tenacious reporting, Cook County's broken assessment system may be held to account. Within weeks of publication of the first stories, the county's inspector general launched an investigation of the assessor's office. The Cook County board required Assessor Joseph Berrios to testify at a public hearing, and state and local lawmakers introduced



The launch staff of ProPublica Illinois. (Jill Shepherd)

legislation to limit campaign contributions to the assessor. Citing our reporting, three prominent public interest law offices sued Berrios and the county in December, alleging violations of state and federal civil rights and housing laws. Fairness in the property tax system has become a major issue in statewide elections for 2018, with multiple candidates calling on the assessor to resign following the series.

Another ProPublica Illinois story, by reporter Duaa Eldeib, exposed a youth facility in Southern Illinois where minor offenses, such as spitting at or shoving a guard, led to [lengthy adult sentences for juvenile offenders](#). Understanding the importance of talking with inmates face to face, Eldeib pursued the Illinois Department of Corrections for weeks to win permission to do so. She put nearly 1,500 miles on her car to make multiple trips to a state prison and a county jail.

Reporter Mick Dumke, in partnership with WBEZ (Chicago Public Radio) and the Chicago Sun-Times, took on one of the underlying issues of gun violence in Chicago: [how illegal guns move through the city](#). The story focused on the troubling case of a young man named John Thomas who brokered almost two dozen illegal gun sales at the urging of a friend, who turned out to be a paid federal informant. Through interviews with Thomas, family members, other defendants, attorneys, police and prosecutors, as well as examining hundreds of pages of police reports and court records, Dumke exposed the shortcomings of federal enforcement efforts to stem the flow of weapons, raising questions about whether they are dismantling gun networks or effectively helping to set them up.

Local Stories, National Impact

Communities around the country are frequently the focus of stories with national import. ProPublica saw that firsthand through several of our 2017 investigations.

In “[Sold for Parts](#),” a collaboration with the New Yorker, reporter Michael Grabell told the story of how Case Farms, a chicken processing company with plants in Ohio and North Carolina, built its business by recruiting some of the world’s most vulnerable immigrants — undocumented, and some underage — subjecting them to harsh, even illegal, workplace conditions. The company then used their workers’ undocumented status to get rid of them if they protested or were injured on the job.

To document this hidden story, Grabell spent time in Rust Belt towns and rural North Carolina talking to workers and immigration advocates. He also traveled to the highlands of Guatemala to see what happened to injured workers after they left Case Farms. This reporting had immediate impact, helping to defeat an Ohio measure that would have barred undocumented workers from receiving workers compensation.

“[Bombs in Our Backyard](#),” a series by ProPublica senior reporter Abraham Lustgarten, revealed for the first time 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 — and how the Pentagon has systematically ignored or downplayed its cleanup responsibilities. The project disclosed the practice of burning toxic munitions without pollution controls; the use of contractors to dump hazardous waste into residential neighborhoods; and a decades-long effort to downplay the cancer risks of a common explosive, called RDX, and keep it from being regulated as an environmental pollutant.

In the course of his reporting, Lustgarten acquired data from the Department of Defense identifying the location and status of all 40,000 polluted sites. ProPublica data reporters Lena Groeger, Ryann Grochowski Jones and Sisi Wei used the material to build

“[Bombs in Your Backyard](#),” an interactive news app that lets readers locate and understand the environmental threats lurking in their own neighborhoods. The app and its accompanying [reporting recipe](#) — which shares insights and techniques that guided ProPublica’s reporting — have been used around the country to produce more than 30 local stories, providing readers with information that allows them to independently assess their safety.

After a video went viral last summer of a young African-American man in Jacksonville, Florida, being ticketed and threatened with arrest for jaywalking and failing to carry an ID card, ProPublica reporter Topher Sanders saw the potential for a larger story. He teamed up with Ben Conarck of the Florida Times-Union for “[Walking While Black](#),” a project showing that police use of pedestrian tickets in Jacksonville is racially disproportionate.

Pedestrians can be ticketed for 28 different infractions in the city, including failing to cross a street at a right angle and not walking on the left side of a road when there are no sidewalks. Analyzing data from



Brenda Vallee, a resident of Colfax, Louisiana, watches as a plume of smoke floats above a nearby facility where military waste is burned. (Ashley Gilbertson/VII Photo, special to ProPublica)

local and state agencies — in addition to staking out downtown locations to witness dozens of uniformed officers violating the same pedestrian laws for which their agency issued citations — Sanders and Conarck found that black residents were overrepresented in every category, receiving 55 percent of all pedestrian tickets in Jacksonville while accounting for only 29 percent of the population.

The investigation prompted the sheriff to seek guidance from the local state attorney on whether his officers were properly interpreting the statutes, and he ordered officers to cease writing erroneous tickets for pedestrians who did not have ID on them. The sheriff's office also initiated bias training for officers who work in Jacksonville's predominantly black communities, and state transit experts said the articles armed them with additional evidence for rewriting Florida's pedestrian statutes.



"Is Anybody Home at HUD?" (Cameron Cottrill, special to ProPublica)

A New Network for the New Year

ProPublica has collaborated with 156 other news organizations since 2008, and our reporting recipes have spurred local reporting that has extended the reach of our impact into communities nationwide. We've seen firsthand the enthusiasm that local newsrooms have for deep-dive investigative journalism, even in places that have been hit by massive layoffs.

To support more of this work, we created the ProPublica Local Reporting Network, an initiative to support seven local investigative projects in newsrooms that serve communities with populations below 1 million. In 2018, we will fund one year's salary for each of the seven participating reporters, who will collaborate with ProPublica senior editor Charles Ornstein as they embark on investigative reporting within their local communities. ProPublica's expertise with data, research and engagement will also be made available in support of the work.

Announced in December, our Local Reporting Network selected its initial partners from a pool of 239 applications from 45 states, plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Editors chose projects on topics including conflicts of interest, housing, mental health care, criminal justice and workplace safety.

The newsrooms selected are The Advocate (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), Charleston Gazette-Mail (West Virginia), Malheur Enterprise (Vale, Oregon), Santa

Fe New Mexican, South Bend Tribune (Indiana), the Southern Illinoisan (Carbondale, Illinois), and WMFE (Orlando, Florida). Investigations from the ProPublica Local Reporting Network will be published or broadcast by these local news organizations and ProPublica. We look forward to working with them in 2018.

Over the past year ProPublica has also continued to focus on national stories, ranging from maternal mortality to algorithmic discrimination to enormous waste in medical costs. One big emphasis was our coverage of the dramatic policy changes implemented by the Trump administration. We have examined [regulatory rollbacks, cutbacks and the departure of scientists](#) at the Environmental Protection Agency. We spotlighted [calamitous mismanagement](#) at the Department of Housing Development, and how Immigration and Customs Enforcement is looking to [electronically track visa-holders](#). We've devoted constant resources to identifying appointees who were [quietly installed across the federal agencies](#), with an emphasis on revealing their deep [ties to industry](#) and interest groups. These stories remain crucial, and in 2018 we will continue our efforts.

In the coming year, our newsroom is excited to produce more rigorous, meaningful journalism that engages communities we haven't yet reached in ways we believe can resonate nationwide. We hope you will join us.

Impact

The most important test of ProPublica is whether our work is having impact. By this, we mean not audience size or prizes, but real-world change. Our growth over the past year has also fueled more of this kind of impact, including changes in behaviors, policies and legislation. Learn more about our impact and track the results of our reporting at propublica.org/impact.

Facebook policies on hate speech and discrimination rewritten

After our 2016 investigation revealed that Facebook advertisers could target housing ads to whites only, the company announced that it had built a system to spot and reject discriminatory ads. In 2017, we retested — and found that Facebook still allows housing advertisers to exclude African Americans, Jews, Spanish speakers and other groups, which is a violation of federal law. Facebook said it would temporarily stop advertisers from being able to bar viewers by race while it further studies its ad targeting system.

We also reported on the secret guidelines that Facebook’s censors use to distinguish between hate speech and legitimate political expression, revealing internal documents that lay out Facebook’s rationale behind seemingly inconsistent decisions on the user posts it deletes. We disclosed a paradox in the social network’s rules. White men fall under protected categories of people — based on gender, race or religious affiliation — but black children do not. Following the story, Facebook changed its rules to add age as a protected category, an adjustment that will now lead to the deletion of some slurs.

In September, we further investigated Facebook’s ad-buying platform. We found that advertisers were able to tailor their pitches to people who had expressed interest in such topics such as “Jew hater,” “How to burn Jews,” or, “History of ‘why Jews ruin the world.’” When we asked Facebook about this before publishing the article, the company removed the categories. After the story, the company said it would add more human reviewers, create a way for people to report abusive ad categories, and step up enforcement of the company’s rules against hateful targeting.

We also reported on Facebook in December, this time revealing that it and other major platforms were allowing employers to place recruitment ads limited by age. Older workers never saw the ads. The two ranking members of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging sent a letter to employers and tech companies raising questions about the practice. Sens. Susan Collins and Robert Casey asked Facebook,



Fred Steese was granted a full pardon by the Nevada Board of Pardons Commissioners after we wrote about his case. (David Calvert for ProPublica)

LinkedIn and Google what safeguards they have to prevent age discrimination.

Full pardon granted to one wrongfully convicted man and another exonerated

In our first partnership with Vanity Fair, we reported on the case of Fred Steese, a Las Vegas man who spent 21 years in prison for a murder he didn’t commit. Despite his being proven innocent, prosecutors demanded he agree 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. After our story was published, the Nevada Board of Pardons Commissioners granted Steese a full pardon. In a follow-up story about Demetrius Smith, who was wrongfully convicted of murder in Baltimore and also agreed to an Alford Plea, we reported that the prosecutor had blocked Smith’s request to revise his unusual plea deal and modify his sentence. Prompted by our story, the prosecutor filed a motion saying he had been wrong to veto this request, and asked a judge to schedule a new hearing for Smith. In January 2018, the hearing ended with Smith’s criminal record being cleared.

Sweeping guarantees of due process enacted

ProPublica and the New York Daily News reported in 2016 on abuses in the New York City Police Department’s enforcement of nuisance abatement actions, which allow police to bar people from their homes or businesses, without due process, under claims that they are being used for illegal purposes. Citing our reporting, the New York City Council passed 13 bills in



Otis Nash is charged a discriminatory car insurance premium because he lives in a minority ZIP code in Chicago. (Alyssa Schukar, special to ProPublica)

February 2017 that made sweeping reforms in the way the NYPD can carry out nuisance abatement actions, including the virtual elimination of one of the most controversial aspects of the law: the city’s ability to close locations without warning, pending a resolution to the case. The new laws carve out exceptions only for cases involving prostitution, certain building code violations and businesses that pose a significant risk of physical harm to the public. The reforms mark the most sweeping changes to the nuisance abatement law since it was enacted in the 1970s.

Discriminatory car insurance practices reformed

In partnership with Consumer Reports, we published our findings that car insurance companies across California, Illinois and two other states charge safe drivers in minority ZIP codes at least 10 percent more, on average, than in whiter ZIP codes. Spurred by our reporting, regulators at the California Department of Insurance have since required Nationwide and USAA to adjust their auto insurance rates in the state, and two Illinois lawmakers proposed banning car insurance companies from using a person’s ZIP code when setting auto insurance premiums.

Groundbreaking anti-discrimination law passed

We reported on New York City’s proprietary DNA software (known as the Forensic Statistical Tool, or FST) that has been used to analyze difficult DNA samples from crime scenes in the city and across the nation.

The article showed that some scientists and defense lawyers say FST may be inaccurate, potentially putting innocent people in prison — but the medical examiner’s office had long kept its source code secret. When we subsequently filed a motion in federal court asking for access to the source code for New York’s software, a federal judge unsealed the code, allowing us to publish it online. Following our investigation, the New York City Council unanimously passed a bill to establish a task force that will study how city agencies use algorithms in decisions that affect New Yorkers’ lives, and whether any of the systems appear to be discriminatory. The measure is the first in the country to address algorithmic discrimination.

Online safety strengthened

After we reported that Cloudflare, a major content delivery network, provides services to neo-Nazi sites like the Daily Stormer — including giving them names and email addresses of people who complain about their content — the company altered its policies. In response to our report, Cloudflare now allows people to complain anonymously, and is more selective about sharing with its clients the personal information of people who report objections. The service provider later ended its relationship with the Daily Stormer, taking the site off the mainstream U.S. internet.

Workers’ rights protected

ProPublica investigated how Case Farms, a chicken processing firm in Ohio, has for decades relied on undocumented immigrant workers to staff its dangerous



Case Farms chicken processing plant in Canton, Ohio, is among the most dangerous workplaces in America. (Hector Emanuel, special to ProPublica)

factories. When workers fought for better conditions or were seriously injured on the job, the company used their immigration status to quash dissent and evade paying worker's compensation. Citing our reporting, the Ohio legislature removed from a bill a provision that would have barred unauthorized immigrants from getting workers' comp benefits.

Trump administration conflicts of interest exposed

We reported on Gavin Clarkson, a Bureau of Indian Affairs official in charge of a program that provides loan guarantees to Indian businesses. Our story revealed that prior to his appointment, Clarkson had arranged a \$20 million guarantee under the same program — in a deal that failed, creating disastrous financial outcomes for the tribe involved and embroiling the Bureau of Indian Affairs in an ongoing legal battle. Less than a week after the ProPublica story, Clarkson resigned from his position.

We also reported that the Trump administration hired Taylor Hansen, a lobbyist for the largest trade group of for-profit colleges who had pushed to weaken their regulation. Three days after we revealed his role, Sen. Elizabeth Warren sent a letter to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, citing ProPublica's reporting and requesting more information. That same day, Hansen resigned from the Education Department.

After our reporting in February that Ivanka Trump had not ceded control of her businesses — as she had pledged to do before her father became president —



“Severe Complications for Women During Childbirth Are Skyrocketing — and Could Often Be Prevented” (Kasia Bogdanska, special to ProPublica)



Lauren Bloomstein, a neonatal nurse, died of preeclampsia after giving birth to a daughter. (Bryan Anselm for ProPublica)

she quickly signed and filed the necessary paperwork to resign from her companies.

Maternal health crisis detected — and a woman's life saved

Our reporting with NPR about maternal mortality in the U.S. spotlighted preeclampsia, a dangerous type of hypertension that can emerge after a baby is delivered. Having recently read the story and four days after delivering her first child, Marie McCausland, a 27-year-old scientist in Ohio, recognized that her painful symptoms might be preeclampsia and raced to the nearest emergency room. Although the ER doctor claimed nothing was wrong, she stayed until another doctor was consulted — and her severe preeclampsia was treated, likely saving her life.

Tech company relationships with extremist sites severed

In August, we reported how leading tech companies were helping extremist sites capitalize on their online traffic. PayPal facilitated donations to the anti-immigration site VDARE, for example, despite PayPal's announced policies against doing business with hate groups. After the story, payment processors PayPal and Plaso discontinued services to at least five sites identified by ProPublica.

Harmful police practice abandoned

A 2016 ProPublica investigation published with the New York Times Magazine spotlighted how the Houston Police Department used roadside drug tests to



“Walking While Black” (Cameron Cottrill, special to ProPublica)

secure guilty pleas, sending hundreds of people to jail in recent years — despite widespread evidence that the tests routinely produce false positives. In July, the police department ended its longstanding practice of using the faulty tests, following an order from the then-District Attorney of Harris County to require that any positive field tests be confirmed in a crime lab before a guilty plea could be won.

Spying TVs stopped

We reported in 2015 that Vizio Smart TVs tracked users’ viewing habits and shared them with advertisers, who could then find users on their phones and other devices. In February, the Federal Trade Commission fined Vizio \$2.2 million for surreptitiously collecting details on viewers’ watching habits. Vizio also agreed to delete data collected before March 1, 2016, to get consent before gathering data and to create a privacy program.

Predatory mortgage fees halted (and refunded)

We reported in January that Wells Fargo had improperly charged customers exorbitant fees to extend their promised interest rates when mortgage paperwork was delayed — delays that were the bank’s fault. Weeks later, Wells Fargo opened an investigation of its mortgage fee practices, followed by another investigation by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The executive in charge of Wells Fargo’s home-lending operation in Los Angeles County (where our story was based) resigned from his position. Wells Fargo ultimately acknowledged the problem was more far-reaching than initially known. The company

offered refunds to tens of thousands of customers across the country who were inappropriately charged mortgage fees.

Pioneering opioid-tracking program launched

In September we reported, in partnership with the New York Times, that many insurance companies limit access to pain medications that carry a lower risk of addiction or dependence in favor of more addictive (and cheaper) opioids. Following the story, attorneys general for 37 states sent a letter to the health insurance industry’s main trade group, America’s Health Insurance Plans, urging its members to reconsider coverage policies that may be fueling the opioid crisis. Citing our reporting, Sen. Joe Manchin called on major health insurers to remove barriers to non-opioid pain treatments, and Rep. Elijah Cummings asked whether their policies and preferred prescription drugs have made the nation’s opioid epidemic worse. In response to the mounting pressure, America’s Health Insurance Plans launched an initiative to track how well doctors are following the government’s guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain — the first industry-wide effort to use standard measures to assess progress.

Fines for “walking while black” revoked

In November, ProPublica and the Florida Times-Union reported 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, several local lawmakers, along with the Jacksonville branches of the



“One Officer, Scores of Tickets and a Familiar Disparity” (Cameron Cottrill, special to ProPublica)

NAACP and Southern Christian Leadership Conference, called for the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to stop issuing tickets to pedestrians. By December, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office told its officers not to ticket pedestrians for not carrying a driver's license, acknowledging that Florida law applies license requirements only to motorists. The sheriff's office also initiated bias training for officers who work in Jacksonville's predominantly black communities.

Trailblazing data on medical conflicts of interest recognized

The May issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association focused on conflicts of interest in medicine, repeatedly citing ProPublica's work. Our key health care investigations from 2013 and 2014 — showing that doctors who receive payments from the medical industry tend to prescribe more brand-name drugs, and that doctors prescribe massive quantities of inappropriate and needlessly expensive drugs — were especially noted, indicating that ProPublica's pioneering work is critical to discussion of these issues.

Improper campaign funds returned

ProPublica reported in 2016 that the pro-Trump PAC America Comes First had violated campaign finance laws by not disclosing the source of its funding before Election Day and by exceeding caps on contribution amounts. In February, the Trump Victory campaign fundraising group announced that it had returned the \$115,000 it received from America Comes First.



“‘Alternative’ Education: Using Charter Schools to Hide Dropouts and Game the System” (Brian Stauffer, special to ProPublica)

Kushner business practices investigated

In a story co-published with the New York Times Magazine, we spotlighted Jared Kushner's role as a real estate developer and landlord to hundreds of tenants in low-income housing units in the Baltimore suburbs. Our story disclosed how Kushner Industries had bought up rental complexes — only to leave the homes in extreme disrepair, humiliate late-paying renters, and sue them for thousands of dollars when they try to move out. The office of the Maryland attorney general opened an investigation into the management practices at the apartment complexes. In addition, tenants brought a class-action lawsuit against the firm's property management arm over charges that it has unjustly charged them fees and threatened eviction to make them pay.

Negligent group-home operators held accountable

A 2015 ProPublica investigation, published with California Sunday Magazine, spotlighted how California's network of dangerous group homes are failing many of the state's most vulnerable children — including a boy who was sexually assaulted by a peer at one group home. In April, a jury awarded more than \$11 million to the boy's family, ruling that the operators of the home, FamiliesFirst, neglected the boy as the facility descended into violence and chaos.

Alternative schools investigation opened

In partnership with USA Today, ProPublica exposed how officials in Orlando, Florida were quietly removing low-achieving students from regular high schools, and funneling them into substandard alternative schools to boost the graduation rates of traditional schools and hide the number of dropouts. In response, Florida's Department of Education opened an investigation into how alternative schools classify students who leave without graduating.

Patient privacy defended

In December 2015, with the New York Times, 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, 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, a move that could revoke or suspend his license.

Recognition for Our Work

Our work was honored in 2017 as follows:

Our collaboration with the New York Daily News, on **widespread misuse of New York City's nuisance abatement law**, won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The stories also won a James Aronson Award for Social Justice Journalism, and were finalists for the Deadline Club Awards for local news reporting and minority focus, and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award in the print/online category.

"Machine Bias," our series exploring the hidden power of computer-generated algorithms across society, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting. The series won the Scripps Howard Award for digital innovation, a Society for News Design Award of Excellence in the graphics category and a silver medal from the Malofiej International Graphics Awards.

Our prescient project with Texas Tribune, **"Hell and High Water,"** on how a major hurricane could devastate the Houston region, won the Peabody Award in the web category, the Edward R. Murrow National Award in the category of investigative reporting, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers' Best in Business Award for innovation, the Editor & Publisher EPPY Award for Best Use of Data/Infographics, the Knight-Risser Prize for Western Environmental Journalism, the AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Award in the online category, the Radio and Television Digital News Association's Regional Edward R. Murrow Award for investigative reporting and a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for features. The series was also a finalist for the National Magazine Award for multimedia, the Online Journal-

ism Award for excellence and innovation in visual digital storytelling, the Deadline Club Award for digital innovation, the University of Florida Award for Investigative Data Journalism, the North American Digital Media Award for best data visualization, the National Academies Communications Award in the online category, and received the Headliners Foundation of Texas' Showcase Silver Award.

For his portfolio of stories on **the roots of the 2016 political season**, reporter Alec MacGillis won the George Polk Award for national reporting and the Scripps Howard Award for topic of the year. MacGillis was also recognized for his deep reporting on a range of policy issues with the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award.

"Anatomy of Doubt," in collaboration with This American Life and The Marshall Project, won the Peabody Award for radio/podcast.

"Busted," which exposed how police use error-prone drug kits to convict thousands of people every year, won the John Jay College/Harry Frank Guggenheim Award for Excellence in Criminal Justice Journalism in the series category, the Sigma Delta Chi Award for public service in online journalism, a James Aronson Award for Social Justice Journalism, and a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for graphics. The series was a finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism in the investigative category and the Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism, and a runner-up for the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting.

Electionland, a national reporting initiative that covered voters' experiences during the 2016 election



Car insurer Safeco charges 13 percent more in Pernell Cox's affluent Los Angeles minority neighborhood than it would in a white suburb. (Kendrick Brinson for ProPublica)

in real time, won the Online Journalism Award for planned news/events, the Data Journalism Award for News Data App of the Year and the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi Award for online non-deadline reporting.

"Fire Fight," our investigation into the state-by-state lobbying efforts of U.S. homebuilders to block life-saving fire sprinklers from new homes, won the National Press Club's Sandy Hume Memorial Award for Excellence in Political Journalism.

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

"Rent Racket," our series on how New York City landlords sidestep tenant protections, won the Society of American Business Editors and Writers' Best in Business Award for real estate, the Excellence in Financial Journalism Award in the local category, and the Deadline Club Award for digital local news reporting, and was a finalist for the Online News Association's Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award.

A ProPublica series on **antitrust enforcement** — explaining why the Justice Department backed down from fighting corporate concentration in the airline industry, and exposing the hidden world of economic consultants working for merging corporations — won the Excellence in Economic Reporting Award.

Our **"Lost Cause"** maps, showing counties that supported losing presidential candidates, won the Society of News Design Award of Excellence for graphics, and a silver medal for visual reporting from the Malofiej International Infographics Awards.

Our series with Consumer Reports on **racial disparities in car insurance premiums** was a finalist for the Online News Association's Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award.

An investigation about **Jared Kushner's role as a real estate developer** and shoddy landlord to hundreds of tenants in low-income housing units in the Baltimore suburbs won the Sidney Award for June.

"Lost Mothers," our series with NPR exploring the maternal mortality crisis in the U.S., was also a finalist for the Online News Association's Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award.

Our series exploring the hidden power of computer-generated algorithms, **"Breaking the Black Box,"** was a finalist for the Online Journalism Award for topical reporting.

Represent, a news application that tracks how elected officials vote, was a finalist for the Online News Association’s Gannett Foundation Award for Technical Innovation in the Service of Digital Journalism.

The **ProPublica Data Store** was a finalist for the Data Journalism Award for open data, and two ProPublica reporters — Lena Groeger and Derek Willis — were named finalists for the Data Journalism Award for Best Individual Portfolio.

Six ProPublica reporters were named finalists for the Livingston Awards, which honor outstanding achievement by journalists under the age of 35: Al Shaw and Jeff Larson for **“Hell and High Water;”** and Sisi Wei, Lena Groeger, Cezary Podkul and Ken Schwencke for their news application that tracks **evictions and rent stabilization in New York City.**

Several of our illustrations were honored by American Illustration, selected for the organization’s annual showcase. Their hardcover book will feature two original illustrations from ProPublica investigations: **“A Gunfight in Guatemala”** and **“Dr. Orange: The Secret Nemesis of Sick Vets.”**

A collaboration with the New York Times, on **New Jersey’s onerous student loan program**, was a finalist for the Education Writers Association Award for investigative reporting, large staff.

Our investigation on the **dismal outcomes for students at for-profit schools** accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools was a finalist for the Education Writers Association Award for investigative reporting, medium staff.

A collaboration with Frontline, **“Terror in Europe,”** about the terror campaign that overwhelmed the defenses of Europe in 2015 and 2016, was a finalist for the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for broadcast/video.

Our **news applications and data visualizations** won a host of awards, including Society of News Design Awards of Excellence for organizational portfolio, social media strategy, product design for the ProPublica Data Store, breaking news and special events for Electionland, features for “Gunfight in Guatemala” and our stories on who Trump is putting in power. The Malofiej International Infographics Awards also bestowed a bronze medal for our Twitter graphics explaining Tor.



Sisi Wei, deputy editor, news applications, and a finalist for the Livingston Award, at ProPublica’s New York office. (Demetrius Freeman for ProPublica)

ProPublica's Growing Distribution

The growth of our readership has prompted a renewed focus on engaging more deeply with — and further building — our readership. 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. With a greater emphasis on visuals and video in 2017, we continued to employ innovative uses of social media to amplify our work, while our crowdsourcing efforts have increased audience engagement and cultivated communities around our stories. Leveraging this variety of tools has helped to significantly raise our profile and support our goal of maximum impact.

46	Publishing partners in 2017	
3,900,000	Pageviews on ProPublica platforms per month on average	UP 50%
1,200,000	Off-platform pages viewed on MSN, Google Play Newsstand, SmartNews and News Republic per month on average	
385,000	Pages republished under Creative Commons per month on average	DOWN 15%
2,100,000	Unique visitors to ProPublica.org per month on average	UP 89%
118,000	Email subscribers	
712,000+	Twitter followers	UP 51%
374,000+	Facebook fans	UP 76%

Publishing Partners, 2017

ProPublica has had 156 publishing partners in nine and a half years. We choose each partner with an eye toward maximizing the impact of the story in question. Here is a list of our partners in 2017. New partners marked in **bold**:

- Atlantic
- BBC
- **Bloomberg View**
- **Chicago Sun-Times**
- Chicago Tribune
- **City Bureau**
- Consumer Reports
- Des Moines Register
- **Florida Times-Union**
- **Forbes**
- Fortune
- **Gizmodo**
- Guardian
- Houston Chronicle
- Huffington Post
- **Illinois Humanities**
- **Investigative Post**
- IRE Journal
- **Kaiser Health News**
- **Louisville Courier-Journal**
- **National Geographic**
- New York Daily News
- **New York Magazine**
- New Yorker
- New York Times
- NPR News
- Politico
- Poynter Institute
- Real Deal
- Slate
- Source
- Stars and Stripes
- **Stat**
- **Texas Monthly**
- Texas Tribune
- Univision
- USA Today
- Washington Monthly
- Washington Post
- **Vanity Fair**
- Virginian-Pilot
- Vox
- **WBEZ** (Chicago)
- Wired
- WNYC
- **WVUE TV** (New Orleans)

Financial Information, 2017

Once again in 2017 (as happened in 2016 following the presidential election), year-end contributions to ProPublica were surprisingly robust. We are deeply appreciative.

With this outpouring, smaller gifts (not individually-solicited, and below \$10,000) accounted for 17 percent of annual revenues, and the number of donors topped 34,000 — compared with 26,000 in 2016, and fewer than 4000 in 2015 and earlier years.

In addition to a dramatic expansion of our staff and work, which continues in 2018, this support enabled us to increase our accumulated reserve to more than \$19 million, or 90 percent of initially budgeted spending for 2018. The result is a ProPublica that is not only able to do more work and spur more change, but is also much more secure and sustainable.

Revenues

Board of Directors contributions and related grants	\$5,561,000
Major grants and gifts (\$50,000 and above)	\$12,805,000
Online donations	\$3,455,000
Other grants and gifts	\$6,152,000
Earned income and interest	\$294,000
Total	\$28,267,000

Expenses

News salaries, payments and benefits	\$11,588,000
Non-news salaries and benefits	\$2,122,000
Personnel support	\$1,728,000
Outreach	\$902,000
Professional fees	\$67,000
Occupancy and office	\$1,361,000
Capital costs	\$485,000
Taxes	\$9,000
Total	\$18,262,000

Notes: More than 34,000 total donors. All figures preliminary and unaudited

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

Raymond Bonner, writer living in New York

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

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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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Following page: ProPublica reporter Michael Grabell, right, conducts an interview in Guatemala for his story on working conditions at Case Farms chicken processing plant. (Hector Emanuel, special to ProPublica)

