

**THE “PRO”s AT  
THIS INDEPENDENT,  
NONPROFIT  
ONLINE NEWSROOM  
HAVE WON  
SEVERAL PULITZERS  
FOR THEIR WORK**

 **PROPUBLICA**

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

# In the Lives of Americans

ProPublica is an unusual news organization. Nearly all of our stories are investigative, which for most newsrooms is a small part of their work. We also have a clear mission: We seek through our journalism to spur real-world change, and we judge our own success by how often and to what extent we achieve this objective.

And these are unusual times. All of us are confronted with news we never imagined possible, with a level of polarization in our society not seen in a century and a half, with norms being smashed seemingly every week, with news cycles shortening and attention spans with them, with barriers to speech dramatically lowered and a resultant cacophony of speakers.

How does our unusual organization make its way through these unusual times? Sometimes, we must try to bring facts and context to the madness of the moment. But much of the time, with much of our effort, we work to bring to light specific injustices in the lives of millions of Americans, and to do so in a way that can change lives for the better. In this introduction to our work in

2019, we want to spotlight some of those stories.

We have been reporting about online tax filing services since 2013. But it was not until 2019 that we understood the extent to which their lobbying efforts, with Congress and especially the IRS, were resulting in higher profits for the companies. We revealed that TurboTax especially, but also H&R Block, were selling millions of taxpayers a service they could have received for free. In most advanced countries, preparing individual income tax returns is a task largely undertaken by government, which uses the information it has already been given to do an initial version for the taxpayer's review. In the U.S., this would be easily achieved for anyone who has only income from a job,

interest and dividends — which describes most people.

But the online services lobbied against the idea of government-assisted tax prep and prevailed in exchange for the companies offering free services to most taxpayers. In fact, however, few taxpayers used the free services. Why? Our stories revealed that the free offerings were confusingly named (paid services were labeled “free”) and even hidden from Google and other search engines. By year-end, TurboTax had agreed to stop the masking of its free service, the naming of the truly free products had been made uniform and the IRS was authorized to enter the tax prep business (although it is not doing so in 2020, suggesting that the power of the companies remains considerable).

**On the cover:** “What is ProPublica?” was the answer to a Jeopardy clue broadcast on November 14, 2019.

Five million Americans are active-duty military personnel, reservists or their spouses or dependents. Millions more have family members in these groups. All of them count on the widely accepted idea that our armed forces are the world's best equipped and staffed, and are ready to fight and prevail should that become necessary.

But a series of stories we published in 2019, "Disaster in the Pacific," centering on three accidents in 2017 and 2018 that resulted in the deaths of 20 service members, challenges these assumptions. Our reporting showed that U.S. sailors and aviators are often not properly trained for combat and are frequently sent out with outmoded or slipshod equipment. When the inevitable accidents occurred, investigations led by senior officers blamed rank-and-file sailors for what were clearly systemic shortcomings. In three of the cases we reported on, senior officers evaded responsibility even though their subordinates had been repeatedly warning of possible disasters.

These stories struck a chord with a wide range of active-duty personnel and their loved ones. Thus far, the Trump administration has refused to acknowledge the pervasiveness of the Navy's problems, even as it moves closer to military confrontation in the Middle East, the perennial global hotspot. Congress has scheduled hearings on the issues we spotlighted, providing some reason to hope change may yet come.

It is not necessary for a story to be national in scope to affect the lives of a large number of people, and ProPublica's growing efforts in local journalism made import-



*Our investigation reconstructed the 2017 crash of the USS Fitzgerald — one of the Navy's deadliest accidents — and showed how the warship was doomed by its own senior leadership. (Xaquín G.V.)*

ant differences in 2019. Reporting by ProPublica Illinois and the Chicago Tribune revealed and reviewed 35,000 instances of the use of "isolated timeout" and physical restraints in schools throughout Illinois. Seclusion was being over-used and misused, with horrifying consequences for thousands of children and their families. The reaction from officials to these stories was quick and dramatic. The suspect practices were almost immediately suspended, as the governor, legislature and state Board of Education instituted new emergency rules and scrambled to craft longer term reforms.

ProPublica Local Reporting Network partner MLK50: Justice Through Journalism investigated the rapacious debt collection practices of a sectarian hospital in Memphis and found that it had sued more than 8,300 patients for unpaid bills over five years, including more than 160 of its own employees. Again, the reaction

began quickly and ultimately the hospital reformed debt collection practices, raised the minimum wage for employees and erased almost \$12 million in medical debt in thousands of court cases.

In the year ahead of great debates and important choices, there will be a lot to say about crucial issues like immigration, trade and jobs, and health care. ProPublica is determined to shed light on those issues and to help inform those choices. Once again, as we did in 2016 and 2018, we will deploy Electionland, a journalistic collaboration intended to help safeguard the sacred American right to vote.

At the same time, day in and day out, we are determined to again reveal stories of injustices that detract from our collective pursuit of life, liberty and happiness — always with the aim of righting wrongs and spurring change. We deeply appreciate your interest in that work.

# Highlights of the Year at ProPublica

## Impact

Our work spurred significant impact, including the scrapping of industry-backed legislation that would have barred the IRS from creating a free electronic tax filing system, major reforms to Chicago's aggressive and unequal ticketing system, medical debt cleared for some of Memphis's poorest patients, hate group members sentenced to prison, an emergency ban on isolated seclusion in Illinois schools, and millions of dollars allocated to improve public safety in Alaska.

## Memorable Stories

Our journalism shined a light on three of the military's deadliest accidents in decades after senior officials ignored years of warnings, a student aid loophole in which wealthy parents gave up custody of their children to access need-based scholarships, how the intense deadline pressure that Amazon puts on independent delivery drivers threatens public safety, a secret Facebook page where current and former Border Patrol agents shared jokes about migrant deaths, the pervasive use of jailhouse informants and how the practice corrupts the justice system, politically connected billionaires benefiting from the opportunity zone tax break intended as an anti-poverty measure, and how carbon offsets have failed to deliver their promised climate benefits.

## Support for Local Reporting

In 2019, ProPublica expanded its Local Reporting Network to 21 newsrooms around the country, with projects that exposed how California's efforts to reduce the population of state prisons have led to overcrowded and dangerous conditions in its county jails, the



*Current and former employees of online tax filing services TurboTax and H&R Block revealed that the companies steered customers away from the government-sponsored free option and made them pay. (Richard Borge, special to ProPublica)*

petrochemical industry's rapid growth in Louisiana's most polluted communities, how the largest hospital system in Memphis has sued and garnished the wages of thousands of poor patients for unpaid medical bills, and how a lack of public safety resources and generations of broken government promises have created a sexual assault and child-abuse crisis in Alaska. We also announced a new partnership with The Texas Tribune for a jointly operated investigative reporting unit serving Texas beginning in 2020 and launched Collaborate, an open-source tool that makes it easier for reporters and newsrooms to work together on data collaborations.



*ProPublica staff reacts to our receiving the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, April 15, 2019. (Demetrius Freeman for ProPublica)*

### **Award-Winning**

ProPublica won the Pulitzer Prize — our fifth — for feature writing for a series on MS-13 co-published with New York magazine, Newsday and the New York Times Magazine. Our series “Zero Tolerance” was a finalist for the Pulitzer gold medal for public service, in addition to winning the first-ever Peabody “Catalyst” Award and the George Polk Award for immigration reporting. The ProPublica and PBS Frontline collaboration “Documenting Hate” won the News & Documentary Emmy award for Outstanding Investigative Documentary and an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award.

### **Larger, More Versatile and Diverse Staff**

With increased resources from a doubling of funding over the last three years, ProPublica has grown from a news staff of 51 to 119 (and still growing). We’ve added capacity in engagement, video, and an audience team, as well as many more reporters covering a much

wider range of places and subjects. At the same time, our staff is growing increasingly more diverse, from 30% non-white in 2017 to 37% in 2019.

### **Partnerships**

Our publishing partnerships continued to grow, with 70 in 2019 alone. Partners over the past year included the New York Times, the Washington Post, NPR News, Frontline, Univision, the New Yorker and the Atlantic, as well as new national partners American Banker, Military Times and The Trace.

### **Growing Platform**

Across all our distribution platforms, including third-party distributors such as Apple News, Microsoft News, Google News and SmartNews, many ProPublica stories this year recorded more than 1 million page views. Overall, traffic on our own site rose 42%, while newsletter subscriptions nearly doubled to more than 250,000.

# Impact

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

## **IRS Reforms Free Tax Filing Program**

In April, ProPublica drew attention to a provision in the proposed Taxpayer First Act that would permanently bar the IRS from creating a free electronic tax filing system, a move that Intuit, the maker of TurboTax; 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. In response to our stories, scores of readers called TurboTax to complain — and the company agreed to refund their money. Intuit also changed the code on the TurboTax Free File page so that it is no longer hidden 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, and the Los Angeles city attorney 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 provision that would have enshrined the current system. By December, the IRS agreed to major reforms with the tax prep software industry, including barring companies from hiding their free products from

search engines. The changes also scrapped a years-old prohibition on the IRS creating its own online filing system that would allow citizens to simply file their taxes for free.

## **Discriminatory Facebook Policies Terminated**

In 2016, ProPublica reported that Facebook allowed advertisers to buy credit, housing and employment ads that exclude anyone with African American, Asian American or Latino affinities from seeing them. Our 2017 follow-up found that the social network had not remedied the problem. In March, the company announced that Facebook advertisers can no longer target users by age, gender and ZIP code for housing, employment and credit offers — sweeping changes included in a major settlement with civil rights organizations. A week later, however, the Department of Housing and Urban Development sued Facebook for violating the Fair Housing Act, alleging that the social network's ad system has the effect of discriminating even when advertisers did not choose to do so. 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



*ProPublica Illinois revealed how Chicago's aggressive ticketing practices leave the city's working poor with more fines and fees — and spiraling debt. (Rob Weychert/ProPublica)*

the platform to discriminate. And in September, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruled that seven employers, including Capital One, Edward Jones and Enterprise Holdings, violated civil rights law through their use of Facebook's targeting advertising before 2019 to exclude women and older workers from job ads.

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

In 2018, a ProPublica Illinois and WBEZ investigation showed that Chicago uses aggressive ticketing practices to boost 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 Chicago can no longer hold impounded cars after drivers file for bankruptcy. In July, new 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. In September, the Chicago City Council approved an overhaul of its punitive system, making Chicago the largest U.S. city to enact major reforms of its system of fines and fees; and in October, Illinois lawmakers passed the License to Work Act, ending license suspensions for a number of non-moving violations, including unpaid parking and vehicle compliance tickets.

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

In partnership with Time magazine, ProPublica launched an investigation in 2018 into an acclaimed



*Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare, a nonprofit Christian hospital in Memphis, dialed back aggressive debt collection and raised wages after our investigation. (Andrea Morales for MLK50)*

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 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 ignored patients with any form of health insurance, no matter their out-of-pocket costs. Its health plan also didn'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 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. In September, Methodist forgave nearly \$12 million in debts owed by more than 6,500 patients, including more than \$30,000 from a woman featured in our story.

### **Emergency Ban on "Isolated Timeouts" Enacted**

In November, ProPublica Illinois partnered with the Chicago Tribune on an investigation into the use of "isolated timeout" rooms within Illinois public schools. We found that children as young as 5 were sent to seclusion rooms, sometimes for hours on end, alone and often terrified, for infractions as minor as spilling milk. These isolated timeouts were routinely — and illegally — misused across the state. The day after our report was published, Gov. J.B. Pritzker called the practice "appalling" and vowed to work with legislators to enact a permanent ban. In addition, he directed the state Board of Education to make emergency rules to end isolated seclusion in Illinois schools. Under these rules, children are now put in

timeout only if a “trained adult” is in the room and the door is unlocked. Timeouts must also be used only for therapeutic reasons or to protect the safety of students and staff.

### **Police Charged With Misconduct**

The South Bend Tribune, a member of our Local Reporting Network, partnered with ProPublica for a 2018 investigation that revealed deep flaws and abuses of power in the criminal justice system in Elkhart, Indiana. Among other revelations, the series revealed video showing two Elkhart police officers repeatedly punching a handcuffed man — an incident for which the officers had been issued only reprimands and which only became public after ProPublica and the Tribune began investigating. In March, a federal grand jury indicted the two police officers on civil rights charges. An outside study of the Elkhart Police Department ordered after our investigation found that the force lacks accountability, with officers viewed in the community as “cowboys” who engage in “rough treatment of civilians.” The study also offered recommendations to make officer discipline more consistent, promotions less political, citizen complaints easier to file and the department’s workings more transparent.

### **Unsafe Children’s Shelters Closed**

ProPublica Illinois reported extensively in 2018 on conditions inside the state’s shelters for immigrant children, finding problems including sexual abuse, lax supervision and runaway children. In March, Heartland Human Care Services, which managed some of the shelters featured in this reporting, announced plans to close four of its shelters in suburban Chicago and add staff, training and other resources at its remaining five facilities.

### **Federal Funding Approved to Prevent Land Theft**

In partnership with the New Yorker, ProPublica published an investigation into heirs’ property, a legal means for land to be passed down to family without a will, which has made property owners vulnerable to losing their land and prohibits them from receiving the full benefits of land ownership. This had led to billions of dollars in land loss, primary by black landowners in the southern U.S. Within days of our

reporting, Sens. Doug Jones of Alabama and Tim Scott of South Carolina sent a letter urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture to immediately implement heirs’ property provisions that were secured in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Shortly after, the USDA announced two listening sessions on heirs’ property to assist with a relending program to clear titles and address obstacles to gaining access to certain government programs. In October, the U.S. Senate passed an amendment to help heirs’ property owners clear their titles. The amendment, which also passed in the House, includes \$5 million in funding for lending organizations to provide loans to landowners who are seeking to clear up or consolidate ownership, helping them pay for legal assistance or obtain necessary documentation.



*Brothers Licurtis Reels and Melvin Davis were jailed for eight years after refusing to leave the coastal North Carolina land their great-grandfather bought 100 years ago. (Wayne Lawrence)*



*A high school student from Northbrook, Illinois, and her mother who turned to the college planning company Destination College for help. The firm provides the option of changing a student's guardianship to lower tuition expenses. (Max Herman for ProPublica Illinois)*

### **Border Patrol Facebook Group Spurs Multiple 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 House Committee on Oversight and Reform launched its own probe with a hearing that included Ocasio-Cortez questioning the Department of Homeland Security chief at the time. CBP 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 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; the Illinois governor vowed to root out parents who were scamming the system and directed his staff to further investigate the issue; and the University of Missouri started examining its students, saying it would pull financial aid from anyone caught exploiting guardianship for their own personal gain. Members of the Illinois House Higher Education and Appropriations Committees also held hearings on the scandal to explore the potential drafting of a new law.

### **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. By May 2019, four members or associates of the hate group Rise Above Movement pleaded guilty to federal charges for their role in the violence. In July, three of the men were sentenced to more than two years in prison. The fourth man is still awaiting sentence.

### **Federal Funds Pulled From Harmful Psychiatric Hospital**

In 2018, ProPublica Illinois uncovered numerous allegations of sexual abuse and assault against children who were patients at Chicago Lakeshore Hospital, a psychiatric facility. In response to the report, in 2019 the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services terminated an agreement with Lakeshore and pulled federal funding from the hospital. The Illinois Depart-

ment of Public Health also announced it is moving forward with plans to revoke the hospital’s license.

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

The Anchorage Daily News, a member of the ProPublica Local Reporting Network, partnered with us for a project that 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, including three new federal prosecutors to focus on rural Alaska, the hiring of 20 more officers and upgrading public safety infrastructure for Alaska villages. In October, Barr announced an additional \$42 million toward more village law enforcement and tribal victim services.

### **Error-Riddled Immigration Rule Corrected**

In August, ProPublica revealed that a sweeping immigration policy rushed by the Trump administration — intended to make it harder for low-income immigrants to come to or remain in the United States — included a provision treating the families of U.S. citizens in the military more harshly than families of noncitizens in the military. Six weeks later, the administration announced that it would correct these substantive errors.

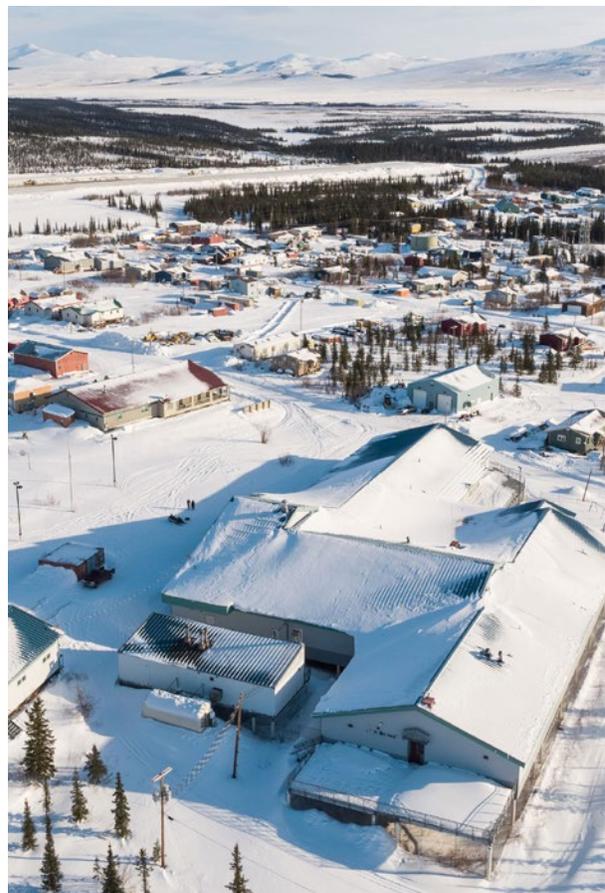
### **Rhode Island Moves to Certify 911 Call Takers in CPR**

ProPublica’s Local Reporting Network series with The Public’s Radio examined 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, and is resulting in unnecessary deaths. 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. The state police superintendent pledged to conduct a thorough review of procedures and training provided to 911 call takers, and in April, Gov. Gina Raimondo supported the superintendent’s recommendation to have all of the state’s 911 call takers trained to provide emergency medical instructions over the phone before first responders arrive.

### **Biased Police Practice Abandoned**

In 2018, ProPublica and the Philadelphia Inquirer reported on tactics used by state and local police officers in Pennsylvania to help U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement round up immigrants for deportation. In February, the Pennsylvania State Police implemented a new policy that bans some of the most



*Remote Alaska Native villages like Kiana, on the Kobuk River, have struggled to provide consistent law enforcement for its residents. (Loren Holmes/Anchorage Daily News)*



Rhode Island resident Barbara clutches her grandson Alijah's baby blanket. Alijah was 6 months old when he went into cardiac arrest and his family called 911. (Kayana Szymczak, special to ProPublica)

egregious behaviors profiled in our reporting, including questioning Latino motorists about immigration issues during routine traffic stops. Under the new policy, state troopers are also prohibited from detaining or arresting foreign nationals simply for being in the country illegally. In addition, the ACLU filed a federal lawsuit in June alleging that Pennsylvania troopers were profiling people who appeared to be Latinx, regardless of their citizenship status, and illegally stopping them without cause.

### **Flawed “Voter Fraud” System Suspended**

In 2017, ProPublica and Gizmodo reported that a Kansas system supposedly meant to identify voter fraud was riddled with errors and data security flaws

that could imperil the safety of millions of people's records. In December, Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab announced that the state will abandon the use of the controversial technology.

### **Violent Vigilante Sentenced to Prison**

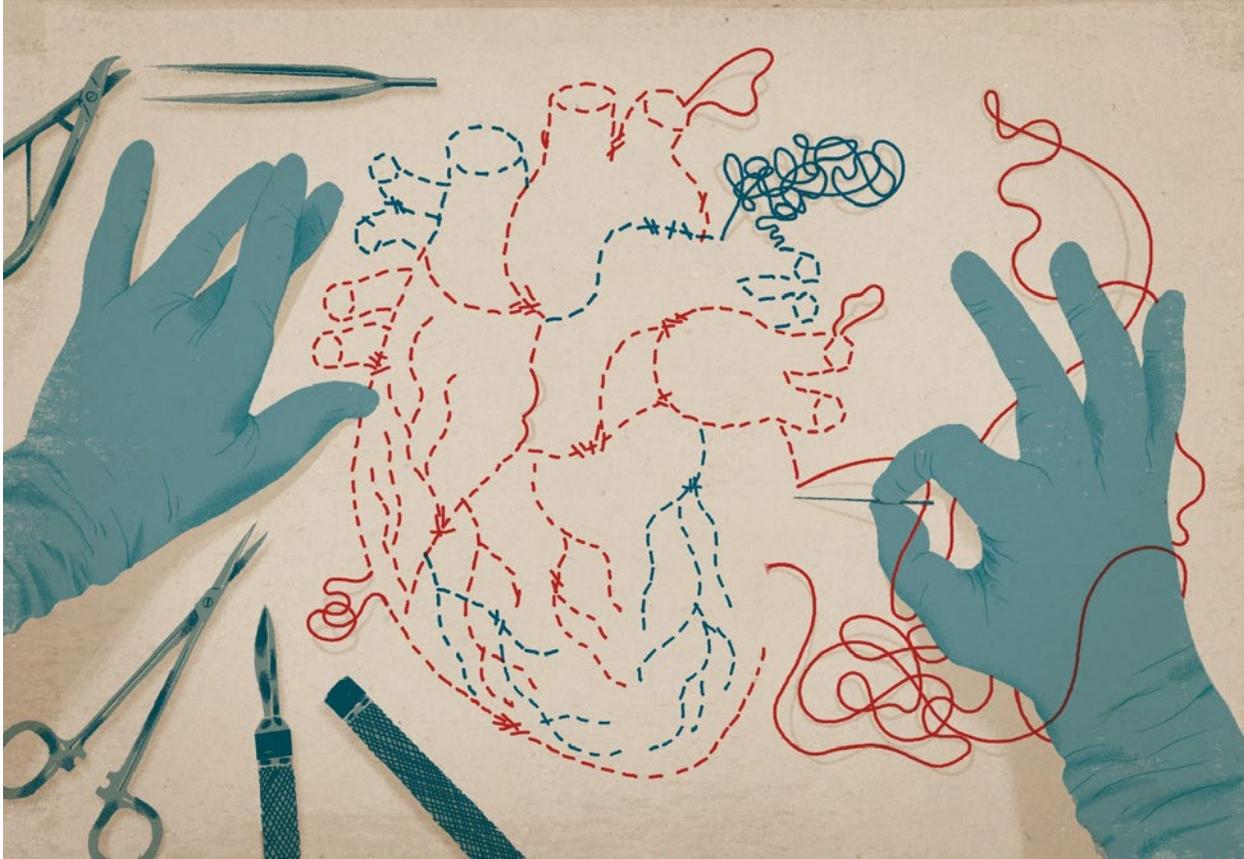
In one of ProPublica's early investigations from 2010, exploring New Orleans police violence in the chaotic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we reported that white vigilantes organized an armed group to keep African Americans from entering the neighborhood of Algiers Point. While the enclave was supposed to serve as an official evacuation zone for flood victims, vigilantes shot African Americans who approached seeking transportation. In February 2019, a federal judge sentenced Roland Bourgeois Jr., whom ProPublica identified as a participant in the incident, to 10 years in prison for his role in the shootings.

### **Medical Conflicts of Interest Curtailed**

In September 2018, 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. In January, MSK announced that it would bar its top executives from serving on corporate boards of drug and health care companies. Hospital officials also told the center's staff that the executive board had formalized a series of reforms — including prohibiting board members from investing in startup companies that MSK helped found and preventing hospital employees who represent MSK on corporate boards from accepting equity stakes or stock options from the companies.

### **Election Board Restructured**

ProPublica, in partnership with the Lexington Herald-Leader, detailed Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes' use of the voter registration system to look up the voting records of state employees, job applicants and political rivals. The news organizations also dug into a no-bid election security contract that Grimes gave to an inexperienced campaign donor and allegations that she intentionally failed to comply with a federal consent decree to improve the state's voter rolls. In March, the Kentucky legislature passed a bill, which the governor signed into law, that stripped Grimes of her authority over the State Board of Elections, restructured the SBE and made misusing



*ProPublica and the Houston Chronicle investigated troubles at Baylor St. Luke's in Houston, an illustrious heart program that has recently had some of the worst outcomes in the country. (Pep Montserrat, special to ProPublica)*

the voter registration system a misdemeanor crime. The secretary of state is now a nonvoting member of the SBE, and the board will include two former county clerks, one from each party.

### **Hospital's Management Team Replaced**

In 2018, 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. In January, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services sent a team of 11 federal and state inspectors to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the hospital. Also in January, St. Luke's board replaced the hospital's president, chief nursing officer and senior vice president of operations after yet another patient died, this time after receiving a transfusion with the wrong blood type.

### **Oversight for Private Garbage Collection Tightened**

In 2018, ProPublica profiled dangerous practices and conditions in the world of private commercial garbage collection in New York City, including fatal accidents, "sham" unions and checkered oversight. In February, the New York City Council passed a bill authorizing the Business Integrity Commission to directly police the labor unions at private trash companies across the city, empowering the agency to remove officials with criminal convictions, as well as officials who associate with members of organized crime or anyone convicted of a racketeering activity. In March, Commissioner Daniel Brownell of the BIC — after months of embarrassing news coverage and calls for the agency to step up its oversight — resigned. In October, the New York City Council passed legislation to overhaul the sanitation industry and hold haulers to strict labor and environmental standards. And in November, Mayor Bill

de Blasio signed a series of bills to reorganize the trash collection business into zones, which is expected to improve safety and reduce truck traffic by up to 50%.

### **Inaccurate Gang Database Assailed**

In 2018, ProPublica Illinois investigated Chicago's gang database — which has been accessed more than 1 million times over the last decade by immigration officials, the FBI and scores of other agencies — and found that it is riddled with dubious entries, discrepancies and outright errors. ProPublica was the first news organization to obtain and publish the contents of the database. In April, Chicago's inspector general released a 159-page report confirming the errors and finding that the Chicago Police Department has done little to make sure the information is accurate. In a letter to the inspector general's office, then police Superintendent Eddie Johnson wrote that the department is retooling its data system to create clearer standards, improve officer training, perform regular audits and implement an appeals process for those wrongly listed in the database.

### **University Reforms Policies That Protected Sexual Harassers**

ProPublica and NPR Illinois, a Local Reporting Network partner, published an investigation into the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's handling of sexual misconduct allegations against faculty and staff, revealing that several professors who violated their policies were allowed to stay on staff or quietly resign and take paid leave with their reputations intact. Since our reporting, state and national lawmakers, victims' rights advocates and students called for a review of the University's sexual harassment policies. The University pledged to end the use of confidentiality clauses when professors are fired and is seeking to change policy to prevent faculty and administrators from arguing that academic freedom shields them in sexual misconduct cases. In addition, one of the professors who violated the sexual misconduct policy resigned from a newer position at the University of Alabama a month after we requested documents about his hiring.

### **Role of School-Based Police Officers Limited**

In a 2018 article co-published with the New York Times Magazine, ProPublica told the story of Alex, a Long Island high school student who was accused of gang membership and deported to Honduras for

drawing a devil, his school mascot but also an MS-13 symbol. A school-based police officer reported the doodle, circumventing privacy protections. In response to the story, in January the Huntington school district, which Alex had attended, removed police from school buildings. Along with other Long Island districts, it also sought a formal agreement with the police limiting officers' roles in schools.

### **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



*Our investigation with NPR Illinois, a Local Reporting Network partner, found that professors and employees at the University of Illinois who face credible accusations of sexual harassment often face minimal consequences. (Sally Deng, special to ProPublica)*



*Behind the scenes, health insurers use cash and gifts to sway which benefits employers choose. (Justin Voz, special to ProPublica)*

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.

### **Huge Medical Charges Cleared**

In November, ProPublica published a story about Lauren Bard, an emergency room nurse who was charged

almost \$900,000 for the birth of her premature baby after the hospital where she works rejected her application for insurance coverage for the newborn. The hospital falsely told her it was unable to reverse the decision because of federal regulations. As part of the reporting process, our reporter contacted the hospital to confirm the details and solicit its response. The hospital immediately reversed its decision and retroactively enrolled Bard's daughter in the plan, removing the debt.

### **Investigations Into Unethical Hospital Program Launched**

In October, ProPublica published an investigation of the transplant team at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center that revealed attempts to artificially increase the program's survival rate, an important indicator used by federal regulators. In one egregious case, for a full year it kept a patient alive in a vegetative coma who had no chance of recovery — without informing his family of his dire prognosis — apparently to boost its survival rate. Since our reporting, the federal agency responsible for transplant oversight announced that it would investigate the hospital, the hospital began an audit of its own and it placed the director of the heart transplant program on administrative leave. In November, the FBI opened its own investigation into the unit to determine if the hospital committed Medicare or Medicaid fraud by keeping patients in hospital beds to raise survival rates.

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

ProPublica partnered with WNYC as part of the Local Reporting Network to investigate George Norcross, an insurance broker widely regarded as the most powerful unelected official in New Jersey. We found that a lucrative tax incentive bill led to at least \$1.1 billion in tax breaks for his company, partners and clients of his brother. Shortly after we published the story, Gov. Phil Murphy issued a statement saying he is "deeply troubled" by the findings and that a task force he appointed will further scrutinize projects tied to Norcross. In June, state officials froze a \$260 million tax break given to Holtec International (Norcross serves on its board of directors), pending further investigation of inaccuracies in its application. In August, Murphy vetoed legislation that would have extended the tax breaks spotlighted by our reporting.

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

In 2018, 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 demanded that the incident reporting system be expanded and that government officials present a plan in September to improve oversight.

### **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. The story 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. In January, the Police Department announced it had called on a third party to examine how it handles rape investigations from the initial call to the close of the case. 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.

### **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.



*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)*



*A Trump tax break to help the poor went to the superyacht marina of GOP donor Wayne Huizenga Jr.  
(Saul Martinez for ProPublica)*

### **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 their 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.

### **Opportunity Zone Abuses Targeted**

ProPublica reported on several examples of politically connected billionaires benefiting from the opportunity zone tax break, a 2017 anti-poverty measure meant to attract businesses to low-income communities.

In November, Sen. Ron Wyden introduced a bill that would significantly narrow the scope of the program by removing hundreds of opportunity zones outside low-income areas, narrowing the kinds of eligible investments and requiring increased reporting for recipients of the tax break. Later in the month, Rep. Rashida Tlaib introduced a bill to repeal the opportunity zone tax break from the tax code.

### **Unproven Stem Cell Treatments Put on Notice**

In May, ProPublica partnered with the New Yorker for an investigation into the virtually unregulated stem cell industry, which uses pseudoscience and, in many cases, disreputable medical staff to sell stem cell therapy as a miracle cure for everything from Alzheimer's to arthritic knees. Weeks after our investigation, the FDA notified the company R3 Stem Cell, a major distributor of unapproved birth tissue products, that their products are considered drugs and must have FDA approval in order to be sold legally.

### **Sexual Harassment Investigation Launched**

Following ProPublica's investigation with the New York Times into philanthropist Michael Steinhardt's sexual harassment of women seeking his support, NYU hired a law firm to investigate whether Steinhardt — the namesake of its Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development — had engaged in inappropriate conduct with students, faculty or staff.

### **Senators Introduce Bill to Fix Crumbling Public Housing**

In 2018 and early 2019, ProPublica partnered with the Southern Illinoisan as part of our Local Reporting Network to investigate HUD's flawed oversight of living conditions in federally subsidized housing in small and mid-sized cities, revealing crumbling buildings riddled with rats, cockroaches, mold and lead. Citing our reporting, in November Sens. Dick

Durbin, Tammy Duckworth and Kamala Harris introduced the Housing is Infrastructure Act, adding \$70 billion to the Public Housing Capital Fund, which would aid in building, modernizing and rehabilitating the public housing stock throughout Illinois.

### **Lawmakers Move to Overhaul Troubled Judge Selection System**

In November, ProPublica and the Post and Courier, a Local Reporting Network partner, exposed how South Carolina's system for selecting magistrate judges is rife with politics and flawed oversight, providing fertile ground for incompetence and corruption on the bench. The investigation found that magistrates, who handle hundreds of thousands of lower court cases a year, are often politically connected insiders, most of whom have never practiced law in their life. Following the report, State Sen. Tom Davis filed legislation that would bolster the required legal training for magistrates who aren't lawyers, increase protections for the many criminal defendants who appear before them, and add a layer of scrutiny to magistrate appointments.

### **Transparency on Political Appointees Championed**

In 2018, ProPublica launched Trump Town, a searchable database of the president's political appointees, along with their federal lobbying and financial records. In March 2019, the Government Accountability Office urged Congress to consider legislation that would require the federal government to make key information about political appointees — including their names, titles and financial disclosures — public. The GAO cited Trump Town as the only place to currently find much of this data and argued that the information is crucial to holding appointees to high standards and ensuring the integrity of actions taken on the public's behalf.

# Recognition for Our Work

ProPublica's work was honored in 2019 as follows:

Three articles in our **“Trapped in Gangland” series on MS-13 by reporter Hannah Dreier** — co-published with New York magazine, Newsday and the New York Times Magazine — won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. The series also won the MOLLY National Journalism Prize, the John Bartlow Martin Award for Public Interest Magazine Journalism, 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, the Hillman Prize for magazine journalism, the John Jay College/Harry Frank Guggenheim Award for Excellence in Criminal Justice Journalism in the series category, the Fair Media Council's Folio Award for story of the year, the Daniel Schorr Journalism Prize, the Morley Safer Award for Outstanding Reporting and the Shorty Award for social media. The series was a finalist for the Peabody Award for radio/podcast,

the National Magazine Award for public interest, the Anthony Shadid Award for Journalism Ethics, the News Leaders Association's Batten Medal for Courage in Journalism and the Ancil Payne Award for Ethics in Journalism. 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.

Stories from our series examining the impact of **Trump's “zero tolerance” immigration policy at the border** were a finalist for the Pulitzer Gold Medal for Public Service. The series won the first-ever Peabody “Catalyst” Award, the George Polk Award for immigration reporting, the Paul Tobenkin Memorial Award, the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for breaking news, the Edward R. Murrow Award for excellence in sound and the Chicago Journalism Award for Investigations, and were a finalist for the Goldsmith Prize for investigative reporting and the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award for best investigative reporting and best illustration. Senior reporter

**Ginger Thompson**, who led this coverage, won the 2019 John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism, which recognizes one journalist each year for their cumulative accomplishments. Thompson's work has largely covered the human consequences of federal policy on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, from the war on drugs to immigration.

ProPublica and PBS Frontline's collaboration **“Documenting Hate”** won the News & Documentary Emmy award for Outstanding Investigative Documentary and an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award. For his work on the two-part special, reporter A.C. Thompson won the Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Television Political Journalism in the category of individual achievement by a national journalist. The films were also nominated for the News & Documentary Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing, the Scripps Howard National Journalism Award in the category of broadcast — national/international coverage, and the National Magazine Award for social media.



*An acclaimed charity, founded by American Katie Meyler, promised to rescue vulnerable Liberian girls from life in the streets, but children under its care were being raped by one of the nonprofit's leaders. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)*

ProPublica won an Online Journalism Award for **general excellence in online journalism**, our fifth such award.

**“Unprotected,”** an investigation co-published with Time magazine, as well as a ProPublica documentary on abuse at an American charity for vulnerable girls in Liberia, won the Society of American Business Editors and Writers’ Best in Business Award in the international category, the Edward R. Murrow Award for best news documentary in the small digital news organization division, a National Press Photographers Association Award for online video storytelling, and

the World Press Photo Digital Storytelling Prize and Pictures of the Year Award for documentary journalism. Photojournalist Kathleen Flynn won the National Press Photographers Association Humanitarian Award for her work on the project. The investigation was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for reporting, the Gerald Loeb Award for video, the News Leaders Association’s Dori Maynard Award for Justice in Journalism, the Overseas Press Club’s Madeline Dane Ross Award for best international reporting on human rights, the Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism, World Press Photo’s online video

of the year and the Webby Award for longform documentary, and received honorable mention for the National Press Photographers Association Award for online visual presentation. Reporter Finlay Young was named a finalist for the Livingston Award in international reporting for his work on the series and, with Flynn, received an honorable mention from the judges for the James Foley Medill Medal for Courage in Journalism.

**“Case Cleared: How Rape Goes Unpunished in America,”** a joint ProPublica, Newsy and Reveal series, won the Online News Association’s Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism

Award and the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi Award for online investigative reporting, and was nominated for a News & Documentary Emmy Award in Outstanding Investigative Report in a Newsmagazine.

Our investigation on **age discrimination in the workplace** won a Gerald Loeb Award in beat reporting.

**"Blood Will Tell,"** a collaboration with the New York Times Magazine, won the Scripps Howard Award for human interest storytelling and received an honorable mention for the MOLLY National Journalism Prize.

ProPublica's **"Flood Thy Neighbor"** series in partnership with Reveal and Vox won the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's Communications Award in the online category and was a finalist for ONA's Online Journalism Award in excellence and innovation in visual digital storytelling. The interactive from the series, **"To See How Levees Increase Flooding, We Built Our Own,"** was named a finalist for a GEN Data Journalism Award for data visualization of the year.

**"I Don't Want to Shoot You, Brother,"** ProPublica's multimedia report with Frontline Dispatch, won NABJ's Salute to Excellence Award in the Digital Media – Single Story: Feature category and was a finalist for the News Leaders Association's Deborah Howell Award for Writing Excellence.

"Stuck Kids," a ProPublica Illinois series on **children held in psychiatric hospitals after they've been cleared for release**, won the Award for Excellence in Health Care Journalism

for health policy and the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi Award for online non-deadline reporting. It was a finalist for ONA's Online Journalism Award in the feature, small newsroom category, the Better Government Association's Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Investigative Reporting and the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award for best non-deadline reporting series.

A Local Reporting Network project with the Charleston Gazette-Mail on **the effects of the natural gas industry on communities** won the Online Journalism Award for explanatory reporting and was a finalist for the Scripps Howard National Journalism Award for environmental reporting. The project was also recognized with four awards from the West Virginia Press Association's annual editorial contest.

**"Health Insurance Hustle"** won the Society of American Business Editors and Writers' Best in Business Award for health/science, was a finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award in explanatory reporting and received an honorable mention from the National Press Club Awards in the Consumer Journalism - Periodicals category.

The ProPublica Illinois and WBEZ series **"Driven Into Debt"** won the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi Award for online investigative reporting (independent), as well as two of the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards in best investigative reporting and best data journalism. The series received honorable mention in the Society of American Business Editors and Writers' Best in Business Award in the investigative

category, and was a finalist for the Better Government Association's Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Investigative Reporting and the Peter Lisagor Awards for best investigative/public service and best use of features video.

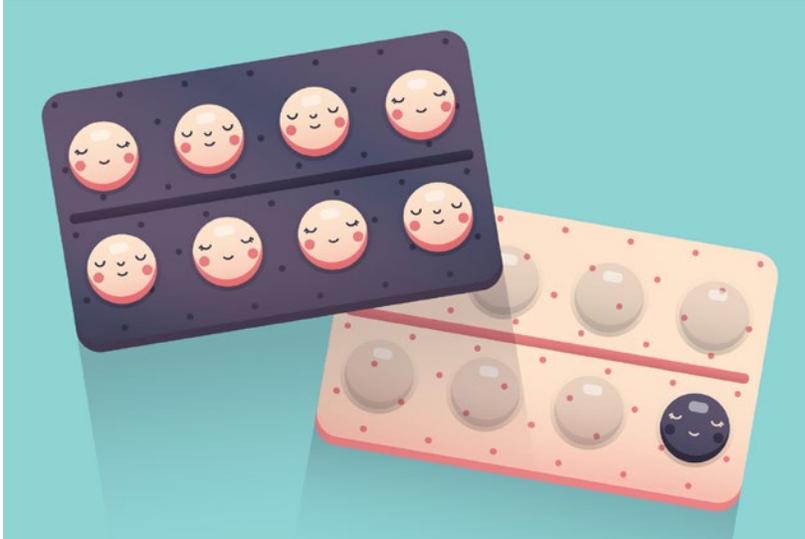
**"The Billion-Dollar Loop-hole,"** ProPublica's report co-published with Fortune on conservation easements, won the National Press Club's Lee Walczak Award for Political Analysis and was a finalist for the Deadline Club Award for business feature.

Our collaboration with WNYC, **"Trump, Inc.,"** won the **Society of the Silurians Excellence in Journalism Medallion** for radio feature news and the Public Radio News Directors Incorporated's Award for best collaborative effort. The joint podcast was also selected as a finalist for a Gerald Loeb Award in the audio category.

Our Local Reporting Network collaboration with the Santa Fe New Mexican on **nuclear worker safety** won the Award for Excellence in Health Care Journalism for public health and the National Headliner Award in the television/environmental category.

**"Inside Trump's VA"** won the National Press Club's Sandy Hume Award for Excellence in Political Journalism and received honorable mention in the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting.

**Electionland**, our collaboration covering the 2018 midterms, won ONA's Online Journalism Awards for excellence in collaboration and partnerships. Jessica Huseman, ProPublica's lead reporter on the project, was named a winner of the Society of Professional Journalists' Sunshine Award.



*We found that African Americans and Native Americans are underrepresented in clinical trials of new drugs, even when the treatment is aimed at cancers that disproportionately affect them. (Chiara Morra for ProPublica)*

Our reporting on the **under-representation of African American patients in clinical trials** of new cancer drugs won the American Association for Cancer Research’s June L. Biedler Prize for Cancer Journalism for online/multimedia and was a finalist for the Society of American Business Editors and Writers’ Best in Business Award for health/science.

“The Right to Fail,” a project with PBS Frontline on **problems with a New York City policy to move mentally ill people into private apartments**, won the Folio Awards’ Robert W. Greene Award in Investigative Reporting and the Deadline Club Award in newspaper or digital local news reporting.

“**Dr. Death**,” a collaboration with Wondery, won the American Society of Journalists and Authors’ June Roth Memorial Award for an Outstanding Medical Article and won third place for the

Award for Excellence in Health Care Journalism in the investigative category.

“**Fuel to the Fire**,” co-published with the New York Times Magazine, won the Overseas Press Club’s Whitman Bassow Award for best international environmental reporting. The collaboration 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.

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

Our Local Reporting Network collaboration with AL.com on **Alabama sheriffs’ release of sick inmates** to avoid the cost of med-

ical care won the Sidney Award for October.

Our Local Reporting Network collaboration with the South Bend Tribune, “**Accused in Elkhart**,” won the Indiana Society of Professional Journalists’ Best in Indiana contest for Story of the Year, and it was a finalist for the Goldsmith Prize for investigative reporting, the News Leaders Association’s Frank Blethen Award for Local Accountability Reporting and the Indiana Associated Press Media Awards for investigative reporting and enterprise reporting.

Our Local Reporting Network collaboration with the Southern Illinoisan on **public housing failures in southern Illinois** won the Illinois Press Association’s Knight Chair Award for Sustained Investigative Journalism and the Illinois Press Association Award for investigative reporting. The investigation won second place for the Illinois Press Association Award for enterprise series and was a finalist for the Illinois Associated Press Media Award for investigative reporting.

ProPublica Illinois’ multimedia report “**We will keep on fighting for him**,” on the impact of a troubling clinical drug trial for children with bipolar disorder, won the Chicago Headline Club’s Peter Lisagor Award in best feature story.

“**Louisiana’s Ethical Swamp**,” ProPublica’s Local Reporting Network series with the Advocate, won the Louisiana Press Association’s Gibbs Adams Award for best investigative reporting.

The ProPublica Illinois series “**The \$3 Million Research Breakdown**,” investigating how a star psychiatrist at the University of Illinois at Chicago violated pro-

tocols and put children at risk, was a finalist for the National Award for Education Reporting in the single-topic news category and for the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award for best feature story, best multimedia feature presentation and best series.

**"Politico-IL Insider,"** a ProPublica Illinois column by Mick Dumke, won two of the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards in the categories of best individual blog post and best continuing blog.

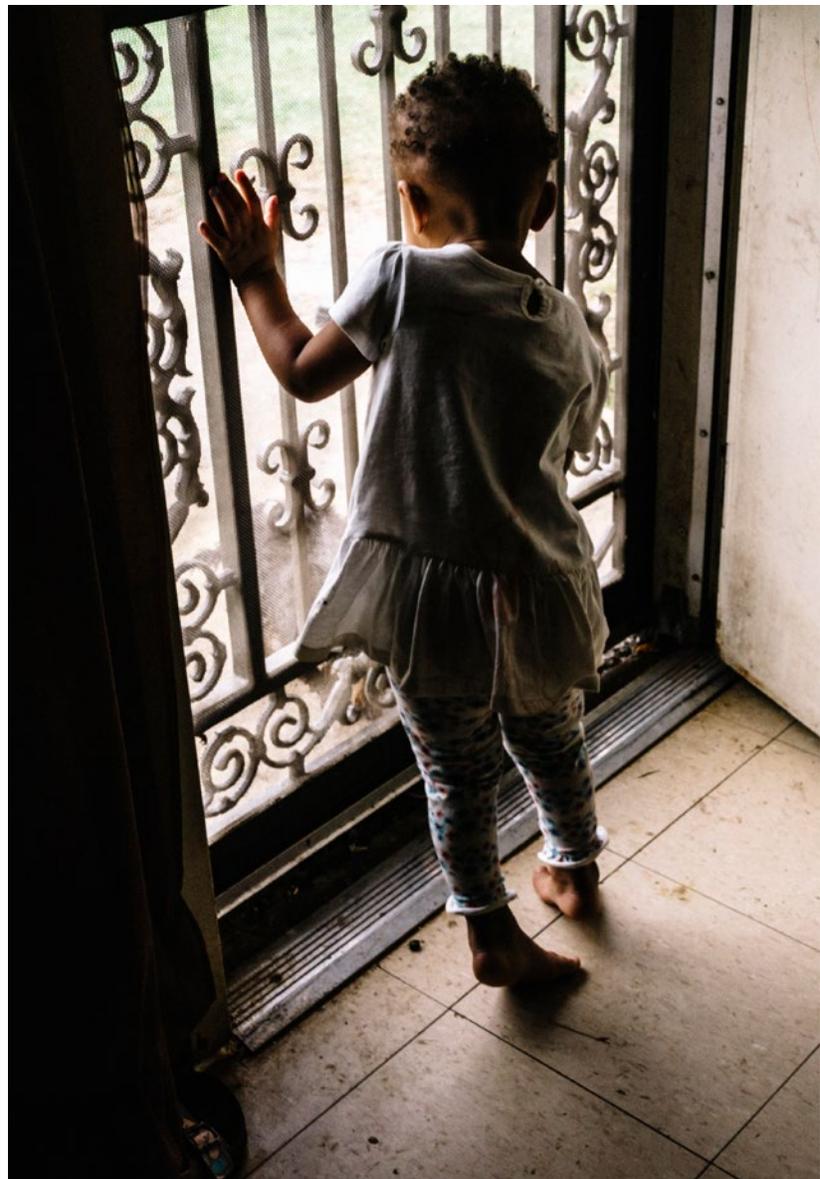
ProPublica president Richard Tofel was honored with the **CUNY School of Journalism Newmark Journalism Award.**

ProPublica Editor-in-Chief Stephen Engelberg won the **New England First Amendment Coalition's Stephen Hamblett First Amendment Award.**

**"The Waiting Game,"** an immersive news game by ProPublica and WNYC, was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for digital innovation and the News Leaders Association's Punch Sulzberger Award for Innovative Storytelling.

**ProPublica Illinois** was a finalist for the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award for general excellence in online journalism.

Our collaboration with the Investigative Fund, **"Trashed: Inside the Deadly World of Private Garbage Collection,"** was a finalist for the News Leaders Association's Frank Blethen Award for Local Accountability Reporting and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Tom Renner Award, and it received an honorable mention for the John Bartlow Martin Award for Public Interest Magazine Journalism.



*A child peeks out the door of the federally subsidized apartment where she lives with her mother and two sisters in rural southern Illinois. (Will Widmer, special to ProPublica)*

Our **"Trump Town"** news app, tracking ex-lobbyists and Washington insiders who have been appointed across the federal government, was a finalist for the News Leaders Association's First Amendment Award. ProPublica's Al Shaw, Claire Perlman, Alex

Mierjeski and Derek Kravitz were finalists for the Livingston Award in national reporting for their work on the project.

Our collaboration with the New York Times on **the Trump administration's pullback on civil rights in education** was a finalist

for the National Award for Education Reporting in the single-topic news category.

Our "Miseducation" project examining **racial disparities in educational opportunities and school discipline** was a finalist for the National Award for Education Reporting for public service, the GEN Data Journalism Award for investigation of the year, and NABJ's Salute to Excellence Award in the Digital Media – Online Project: News category.

Our reporting on **the troubling way that police investigate the murders of trans women** was a finalist for the GLAAD Media Award Outstanding Digital Journalism.

ProPublica and the Houston Chronicle's **"Heart Failure"** investigation won a Showcase Silver Award from the Headliners Foundation of Texas, and was a finalist for the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation's Health Care Print Journalism Award.

Our Local Reporting Network collaboration with WMFE-FM on **PTSD in first responders** was a finalist in the Florida Associated Press Professional Broadcasters Contest.

Our **news applications and data visualizations** won 22 Society for News Design Awards of Excellence for features, coverage,

multimedia, graphics, story page design, maps, new tools, use of data, national, local issues, social media and the individual portfolio of news applications developer Al Shaw; six Malofiej Awards for infographics; and ProPublica's news applications department as a whole was recognized as a finalist for the GEN competition's best data journalism team portfolio (large newsroom). Shaw was also a finalist for the GEN Data Journalism Award for best individual portfolio.

# 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.

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<b>67</b>	Publishing partners in 2019	
<b>5,200,000</b>	Page views on ProPublica platforms per month on average	<b>UP 42%</b>
<b>5,300,000</b>	Off-platform pages viewed on Apple News, Microsoft News, Google News and SmartNews per month on average	<b>UP 172%</b>
<b>425,000</b>	Pages republished under Creative Commons per month on average	<b>UP 40%</b>
<b>2,500,000</b>	Unique visitors to ProPublica.org per month on average	<b>UP 40%</b>
<b>254,000</b>	Email subscribers	<b>UP 94%</b>
<b>832,000</b>	Twitter followers	<b>UP 25%</b>
<b>440,000</b>	Facebook followers	<b>UP 9%</b>

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# Publishing Partners, 2019

ProPublica has had 200 publishing partners in 11 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 2019. **New partners marked in bold:**

ABC News	Guardian	Politico
Advocate [Baton Rouge, LA]	<b>Guernica</b>	<b>Portland Monthly</b>
AL.com	Houston Chronicle	Post and Courier [Charleston, SC]
<b>American Banker</b>	HuffPost	The Public's Radio [Rhode Island]
<b>Anchorage Daily News</b>	<b>Lexington Herald-Leader</b>	Reveal
<b>ARD German TV</b>	Los Angeles Times	Sacramento Bee
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Malheur [Oregon] Enterprise	South Bend Tribune
Atlantic	Marshall Project	Southern Illinoisan
Baltimore Sun	Miami Herald	Star-Ledger [NJ]
Boston Globe	<b>Military Times</b>	Stat
BuzzFeed News	<b>Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting</b>	Texas Monthly
<b>Capital Gazette</b> [Annapolis, MD]	<b>MLK50</b> [Memphis]	Texas Tribune
CBS News	Newsy	Time
Charleston [WV] Gazette-Mail	New York Magazine	<b>The Trace</b>
Chicago Sun-Times	New York Times	Univision
Chronicle of Higher Education	New Yorker	Vox
Clarion-Ledger [Jackson, MS]	Nieman Lab	Washington Post
Commercial Appeal [Memphis, TN]	<b>NPR Illinois</b>	WBEZ
<b>Connecticut Mirror</b>	NPR News	<b>WBUR</b>
Courier Journal [Louisville, KY]	<b>Oregonian</b>	Wired
Dallas Morning News	<b>Pantagraph</b> [Bloomington, IL]	WNYC
Fortune	Philadelphia Inquirer	
Frontline	Planet Money	

# Financial Information, 2019

Another strong finish to the year's fundraising left revenues up 9% for the year and allowed ProPublica to increase its cumulative reserve to more than \$30 million, or about 92% of initially budgeted spending for 2020. This provides an important cushion against an eventual recession, or other reverses in future fundraising unrelated to our work.

## Revenues

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Board of Directors contributions and related grants	<b>\$6,381,000</b>
Major grants and gifts (\$50,000 and above)	<b>\$18,230,000</b>
Online donations	<b>\$3,639,000</b>
Other grants and gifts	<b>\$3,884,000</b>
Earned income and interest	<b>\$934,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$33,068,000</b>

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**Total donors: more than 32,000**

*All figures are preliminary and unaudited, rounded to nearest \$1000.*

## Expenses

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News salaries, payments and benefits	<b>\$19,685,000</b>
Non-news salaries and benefits	<b>\$3,056,000</b>
Personnel support	<b>\$2,205,000</b>
Outreach and fees	<b>\$1,019,000</b>
Occupancy/office	<b>\$1,719,000</b>
Capital costs	<b>\$187,000</b>
Taxes	<b>\$42,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,913,000</b>

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# Officers and Staff

As of January 1, 2020:

EDITOR IN CHIEF

**Stephen Engelberg**

PRESIDENT

**Richard Tofel**

MANAGING EDITOR

**Robin Fields**

VP, DEVELOPMENT

**Ragan Rhyne**

VP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

**Celeste LeCompte**

VP, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

**Stephanie Little**

GENERAL COUNSEL

**Jeremy Kutner**

EDITOR IN CHIEF, PROPUBLICA ILLINOIS

**Louise Kiernan**

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STANDARDS EDITOR

**Diego Sorbara**

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR

**Sisi Wei**

EDITORS AT LARGE

**Tim Golden and Allan Sloan**

SENIOR REPORTERS

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**MacGillis, T. Christian Miller, Sebastian Rotella, A.C. Thompson and Ginger Thompson**

REPORTERS

**Marshall Allen, Isaac Arnsdorf, Talia Buford, Caroline Chen, Lydia DePillis, Justin Elliott, Robert Faturechi, Ryan Gabrielson, Michael Grabell, Jessica Huseman, Akilah Johnson, Paul Kiel, Ava Kofman, Dara Lind, Nina Martin, J. David McSwane, Jake Pearson, Lizzie Presser, Megan Rose, Topher Sanders, Joaquin Sapien, Lisa Song, Mike Spies, Yeganeh Torbati, Heather Vogell, Annie Waldman and Bernice Yeung**

DESIGN DIRECTOR

**David Sleight**

EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE DESIGNERS

**Allen Tan and Rob Weychert**

CREATIVE STORY TECHNOLOGIST

**Agnes Chang**

STORY PRODUCER

**Jillian Kumagai**

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PLATFORMS EDITOR

**Kengo Tsutsumi**

ASSISTANT EDITOR, AUDIENCE

**Karim Doumar**

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

**Ruth Baron**

ENGAGEMENT EDITOR AND REPORTER

**Ariana Tobin**

ENGAGEMENT REPORTERS

**Adriana Gallardo and Maryam Jameel-Kakwan**

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**Beena Raghavendran**

VISUAL INVESTIGATIONS PRODUCER

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**Katie Zavadski**

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**Kristen Berg and Doris Burke**

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**Claire Perlman**

PARTNER MANAGER

**Rachel Glickhouse**

VIDEO JOURNALISTS

**Katie Campbell, Mayeta Clark and Nadia Sussman**

VIDEO EDITOR

**Joseph Singer**

DEPUTY EDITOR, DATA

**Ryann Grochowski Jones**

NEWS APPLICATIONS DEVELOPERS

**Lena Groeger, Al Shaw, Ken Schwencke, Moiz Syed, Mike Tigas, Lylla Younes and Derek Willis**

DATA REPORTERS

**Sophie Chou, Jeff Ernsthausen, Hannah Fresques, Agnel Philip and Ellis Simani**

COMPUTATIONAL JOURNALIST

**Jeff Kao**

AUDIENCE FELLOWS, LOCAL REPORTING NETWORK

**Maya Eliahou and Abby Ivory-Ganja**

ENGAGEMENT FELLOW, LOCAL REPORTING NETWORK

**Maya Miller**

LORANA SULLIVAN SENIOR

REPORTING FELLOWS

**Kyle Edwards and William Young**

REPORTING FELLOW

**Daniela Porat**

RESEARCH FELLOW, LOCAL REPORTING NETWORK

**Benjamin Hardy**

SCRIPPS HOWARD JOURNALISM FELLOW

**Lexi Churchill**

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