

Cover: Tyra Smith and her four sons are one of many Black families that faced a child welfare investigation in greater Phoenix. After having her children taken away for more than a year, Smith now works as a parent advocate for Our Sister Our Brother, a community organization dedicated to helping families rather than separating them. (Stephanie Mei-Ling, special to ProPublica and NBC News)

Our Mission

ProPublica exposes abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by governments, businesses and other institutions, using the moral force of investigative journalism to spur reform through the sustained spotlighting of wrongdoing.

Who We Are

We are an independent, nonprofit news organization that produces investigative journalism with moral force. Our journalists dig deep into important issues, shining a light on abuses of power and betrayals of public trust. Our reporting has contributed to the passage of new laws; reversals of harmful policies and practices; and accountability for leaders at local, state and national levels.

ProPublica was founded in 2008 to address a broad decline in investigative reporting amid the collapse of the business model that had supported American journalism for more than a century. Today, with a team of nearly 150 dedicated journalists — based in New York and working from state and regional offices in the Midwest, South, Southwest and Texas, with a forthcoming unit in the Northwest — ProPublica's staff is the largest in American journalism that's devoted solely to investigative reporting.

How We Work

As a nonprofit, ProPublica's work is powered primarily through donations. The vast bulk of the money we spend goes directly into world-class, award-winning journalism. We are committed to uncovering the truth, no matter how long it takes or how much it costs, and we practice transparent financial reporting so donors know how their dollars are spent.

ProPublica regularly collaborates with other news organizations to report and publish our journalism, extending the reach of each story and maximizing impact.

Our Local Reporting Network gives local newsrooms, which have been particularly hard hit by the decline in local journalism, the opportunity to tackle big, yearlong investigative stories that are crucial to their communities. Selected reporters work in and report to their home newsrooms while receiving extensive support and guidance from ProPublica.



Making a Difference With Our Work — And in Our Field

ProPublica publishes stories that make a difference, spur reform and change lives. The work showcased in this year's report is striking in its scope, from groundbreaking work that revealed the algorithms that may be contributing to spiking rental prices to a project that recounted the legacy of the night raids carried out by CIA-backed Zero Units, which killed countless civilians in Afghanistan.

In 2022, our newsroom also ramped up efforts to make a difference in the field of investigative journalism itself, announcing an expansion of our training programs, blazing new trails in data journalism and partnering with other news organizations to ensure our findings reach the communities most affected by the injustices we discover.

But our most important goal is producing work that has an impact. A few highlights:

- In April, ProPublica and the Chicago Tribune revealed that schools and police were funneling students into a ticketing system that issued steep fines for minor infractions such as littering or swearing. The reporters built a first-of-its kind database of records from more than 500 school districts and police departments. Less than a month later, several schools dropped or reevaluated these policies.
- A story reported with The Texas Tribune found that U.S. Army soldiers accused of sexual assault are less than half as likely to be detained while awaiting trial than those accused of offenses like drug use or disobeying an officer. Following the story, the Army said its rules are "currently under revision."
- A gripping narrative published by ProPublica and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel told the story of a deadly fire in the home of a single mother and her four children, illuminating two systems of justice: one for wealthy property owners, and another for impoverished renters.
- In November, ProPublica, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and more than 50 international media organizations revealed abuses in the unregulated honorary consul program that lets private citizens work from their home countries to represent foreign governments. The team built the first-ever global database of hundreds of criminal or controversial honorary consuls. Since the story published, authorities in Finland, Brazil, Paraguay, Germa-

ny and other countries have launched investigations and proposed reforms to the honorary consul system.

In 2023, ProPublica will celebrate its 15th year at an inflection point in our nation's history. A growing number of politicians are questioning the underpinnings of democracy, insisting that any election they lose is fraudulent. Climate change has made a greater share of the country vulnerable to flooding, fires and extreme heat. Reproductive rights have been eroded. Lawmakers are increasingly dictating what's taught in schools and what public health officials can do and say.

We remain hopeful that people and policymakers, when confronted with verifiable facts, transparent documentation and honestly presented statistics, will be inspired to push for change. Our reporting can serve as a counterweight to the misinformation, disinformation and simplistic slogans of our polarized public life.

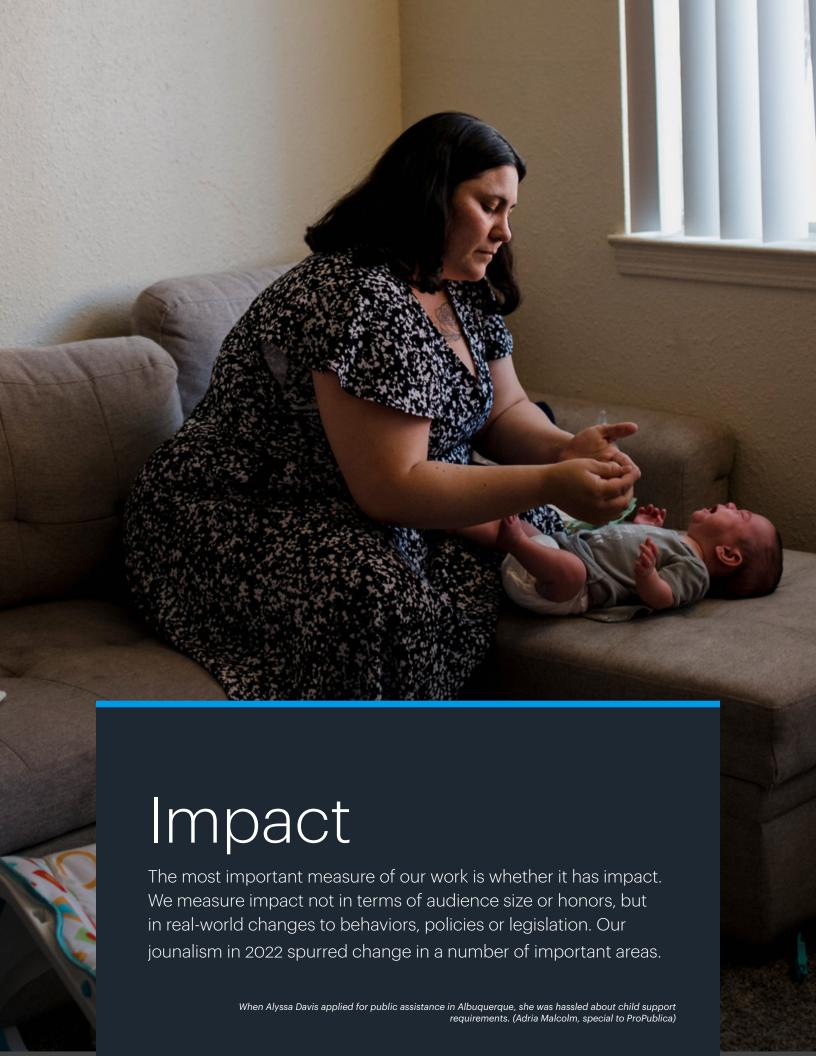
In a relatively short time, our organization has emerged as a change agent for American society, reshaping federal rules on everything from booster seats to the transparency of health care data. Our work — and our impact — is only possible because of the support of our readers. Thank you for believing in our mission. We look forward to another year of bringing change-making stories to light.

Robin Sparkman President

Stephen Engelberg Editor-in-Chief









(Alex Bandoni/ProPublica. Source images: IRS tax form and Jeff J. Mitchell/Getty Images.)

Biden Proposes Billionaire Minimum Tax

Drawing on a trove of secret IRS data, ProPublica in 2021 revealed systemic inequities that allow America's wealthiest citizens to pay little or nothing in federal taxes. The series' first article laid bare the truth about the U.S. tax system: Billionaires like Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Warren Buffett can easily shield their fortunes from taxation by avoiding the sorts of income captured on a tax return. In March 2022, the White House released a proposal that directly addresses this issue. The plan, which ultimately failed to pass Congress, would have introduced a 20% tax on increases in wealth for households worth more than \$100 million, closing the existing loophole by changing what gets counted as income.

Federal Law Requires the IRS to Study Free Tax-Filing Options

Since 2013, ProPublica has shown how the maker of TurboTax and other tax-prep software companies have long blocked efforts to create a free online tax filing system. Not only did the companies successfully lobby against allowing the government to create a free, easy way for taxpayers to file online, but in 2019 we revealed that some tax-prep software companies tricked customers into paying for services that they should have gotten for free. Those articles led to investigations by federal agencies and states, as well as a barrage of consumer fraud lawsuits. In August 2022, President Joe Biden signed into law a domestic policy bill that includes a mandate for the IRS to study options for free tax filing.



Kimberly Guilfoyle attended a campaign event for then-President Donald Trump at Xtreme Manufacturing in Henderson, Nevada, on Sept. 13, 2020 (Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

Foreign Governments Call for Reforms to Honorary Consul System

In November, ProPublica, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and 60 media organizations from around the world published the first part of a global investigation into honorary consuls — volunteer diplomats who work from their home countries to promote the interests of the foreign governments that appoint them. The series revealed widespread abuse of the system, which has empowered and protected hundreds of unscrupulous diplomats, including accused terrorist financiers, violent criminals and aides to corrupt regimes. Since this first-of-its-kind series was published, authorities in nine countries, including Finland, Brazil, Paraguay and Germany, launched investigations and proposed reforms.

Federal Investigation of Jan. 6 Attack Takes Aim at Trump's Inner Circle

Kimberly Guilfoyle, a top fundraiser for former President Donald Trump and the girlfriend of his son Donald Trump Jr., boasted about raising \$3 million for the Jan. 6 "Save America" rally, ProPublica reported in November 2021. In text messages to former Trump campaign adviser Katrina Pierson, Guilfoyle also supported a push to get far-right speakers on the stage — indicating that members of Trump's inner circle were involved in funding and organizing the event, which sought to overturn Biden's victory. Citing this exchange, the House committee investigating the attack on the Capitol issued a subpoena in March 2022 to Guilfoyle, the first member of the Trump family circle to receive one. Guilfoyle denies any wrongdoing.



(Photo illustration by Justin Metz for ProPublica)

Former Alaska Attorney General Charged With Sexual Abuse

In January 2021, ProPublica and the Anchorage Daily News began asking questions about sexual misconduct allegations against acting Alaska Attorney General Ed Sniffen three decades ago that involved a 17-year-old girl. Sniffen resigned before our story was published, and the state launched an investigation into the allegations. In May 2022, a special prosecutor charged Sniffen with three counts of sexual abuse of a minor for allegedly having sex with a 17-year-old girl he coached on a high school mock trial team. Sniffen disputes the allegations and has filed a motion to have the charges dismissed.

USDA Considers Major Reforms to Curb Salmonella in Poultry

A 2021 ProPublica investigation detailed how flawed federal food safety regulations had allowed a drug-resistant salmonella strain to run rampant through the country's chicken supply. In October, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it's considering major reforms to curb salmonella in poultry. The reforms would ban poultry companies from selling raw chicken and turkey contaminated with high levels of certain types of salmonella; require poultry companies to test flocks for salmonella before they are slaughtered; and increase monitoring inside processing plants to prevent the bacteria from spreading.



A letter from Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., zeroed in on an opportunity zone in West Palm Beach, Florida, that contains a superyacht marina owned by a major Republican donor. (Saul Martinez for ProPublica)

Congress Investigates Lender for Sending PPP Loans to Fake Companies

In May 2021, ProPublica reported that online lending platform Kabbage sent 378 Paycheck Protection Program loans worth \$7 million to fake companies. In June 2021, the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis opened a probe into loans by Kabbage and other nonbank financial technology companies, citing ProPublica's reporting. The report, published in December 2022, found that financial technology firms at the front lines of approving PPP loans lacked fraud controls, chased high fees to the detriment of some borrowers and exploited their business relationships to arrange suspect loans for their companies' executives. In response to the report, the company said, "Kabbage adhered to the applicable rules and regulations in good faith."

Senate Finance Chair Asks Billionaire Developers: How Is Your Tax Break Helping the Poor?

President Donald Trump's 2017 tax law overhaul contained a tax break that was meant to attract business to low-income communities called "opportunity zones." A 2019 ProPublica investigation showed that, while benefits to the poor have not yet materialized, wealthy and politically connected billionaires have reaped the tax break's rewards. Developers around the country successfully lobbied to include projects that benefited the affluent in the program, who should probably have never qualified in the first place. In January, citing ProPublica's reporting, Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden demanded information from several billionaire developers to determine whether they are abusing the tax break.



Arianna Bermudez, top, and her son. Rather than help poor parents like Bermudez, Arizona puts a majority of its welfare dollars toward investigating them and sometimes taking their children away. (Caitlin O'Hara for ProPublica)

Elina Asensio, below, says custody evaluator Mark Kilmer downplayed her father's felony child abuse charge in evaluating whether he should have custody of her. (Trent Davis Bailey for ProPublica)

Colorado Suspends Family Court Custody Evaluator and Puts System Under Review

Family court judges in Colorado may appoint an evaluator to assess the best interests of the children in custody cases that trigger legal disputes. These experts, known as parental responsibility evaluators, or PREs, wield tremendous influence over family court proceedings and are subject to little oversight or transparency. A ProPublica investigation in September found that one PRE, Mark Kilmer, is routinely appointed by Colorado courts to advise on disputes frequently involving claims of domestic violence and child abuse, despite his own history of being arrested and charged with assaulting his ex-wife, for which he pled guilty. In an interview with ProPublica, Kilmer attributed his guilty plea of domestic

violence to "poor legal representation" and "false allegations." Our investigation also found that 1 in 5 PREs, including Kilmer, has been publicly sanctioned for various infractions by the Colorado State Board of Psychologist Examiners, six times the rate of discipline for all psychologists with active licenses in the state. In October, the Colorado courts suspended Kilmer and launched a review of the state's entire roster of custody evaluators.



States Change Welfare Policies to Provide Assistance Directly to Families

ProPublica explored the state of welfare in the Southwest, where the poor face punitive requirements in order to get assistance. Prompted by our reporting, several states are reconsidering their approach to welfare, including new legislation to ensure that more assistance is available for low-income families.

- We reported that single mothers seeking welfare assistance in New Mexico are forced to identify their child's father, including the date they believe they got pregnant; the addresses of the father and his relatives; and information on his employment, bank accounts and assets. Some women were even required to submit their children to genetic testing in order to receive aid. When the government is able to find the fathers, the state then keeps child support payments as repayment for the welfare it provides. In March 2022, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law a budget that will allow child support collected from fathers to go directly to their children instead of being diverted into government coffers.
- In Arizona, a majority of welfare dollars go to the state's Department of Child Safety rather than to help poor parents. The agency investigates many of the same parents, and it sometimes even takes away their children for reasons stemming from poverty. In February 2022, state lawmakers introduced a bill that would have increased the amount of cash assistance available to poor parents. The legislation would have also extended the limit, currently the shortest in the nation, on the number of months that these families can receive aid.

Arizona Appoints New Leader of Child Safety Agency

In December, ProPublica and NBC News illuminated racial disparities in Phoenix's child welfare system, finding that 1 in 3 Black children in Maricopa County faced a child welfare investigation over a five-year period. Weeks later, Arizona's newly elected governor, Katie Hobbs, chose a new director of the state's Department of Child Safety: Matthew Stewart, a community advocate highlighted in our story and the department's first-ever Black leader. Hobbs' office said it had read our work and wanted to take the agency in a new direction.





When Georgette Cooke, top, applied for welfare, she had to identify who fathered her child. (Adria Malcolm, special to ProPublica)

Nydea Richards and her children, bottom, are one of many Black families that faced a child welfare investigation in Phoenix. (Stephanie Mei-Ling, special to ProPublica and NBC News)

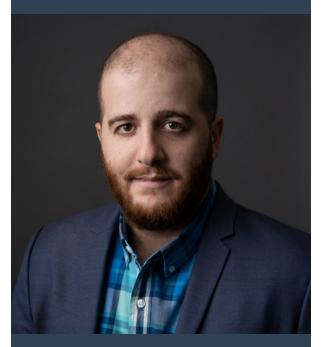
Illinois Lawmakers Call for Action on Failures of Child Welfare System

In Southern Illinois, many families suspected of neglect cycle through the child welfare system, often without getting the help they need. ProPublica and The Southern Illinoisan investigated in April how the state's Department of Children and Family Services repeatedly sends child welfare workers to the same homes to investigate families for failing to provide adequate food, shelter or supervision, yet it fails to provide adequate assistance. The investigation revealed that there were too few DCFS resources for families in Southern Illinois, and existing resources in the region were more difficult to access — a sign that the system is failing to live up to its mission not only to protect children but to "increase their families' capacity to safely care for them." Following our reporting, Illinois lawmakers called on Gov. J.B. Pritzker to improve access to services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Advocates Sue Over Shadow Foster Care Proposal

In December 2021, ProPublica examined America's unregulated shadow foster care system — an informal arrangement in which caseworkers remove kids from their homes and place them with friends or family without going through the courts. While some families prefer this to the formal foster care system, it offers few protections or benefits: no court hearings or lawyers, no services for kids, often no regular checkins from caseworkers and no judge deciding if there's any legal basis to remove a child in the first place. In April, three organizations that represent children in foster care filed a lawsuit against New York over new regulations that would create a shadow foster system in the state, saying that ProPublica made the dangers "abundantly clear." In February of 2023, Washington state Rep. Lillian Ortiz-Self also introduced a first-ofits-kind bill aimed at providing attorneys for parents who are facing hidden foster care.

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT



"So often in child welfare investigations, just as in police investigations, the official word is treated as the final word by journalists. Our decision to tell these stories through the experiences of the families themselves gave a fuller and fairer view of the system's impact."

—Eli Hager, reporter covering the Southwest



Here are examples of articles with false claims that Google placed ads on, in apparent violation of its policies. (Lisa Larson-Walker/ProPublica)

Meta Finally Eliminates Tool That Allowed Discriminatory Advertising

In 2016, ProPublica reported that Facebook (now Meta) allowed advertisers to buy credit, housing and employment ads that excluded African Americans, Asian Americans or Latinos from seeing them. Our story prompted a lawsuit by the U.S. Department of Justice alleging that Meta's ad targeting system violated the Fair Housing Act. In June, six years after our initial investigation, the DOJ announced a settlement. Meta agreed to eliminate features that allow landlords, employers and credit agencies to discriminate against groups of people protected by federal civil rights laws.

Google Deletes Ads that Spread Disinformation

A ProPublica investigation published in October found that Google bankrolls some of the most prolific purveyors of false information in Europe, Latin America and Africa. While the company publicly asserts a commitment to fighting disinformation, Google's digital ad business placed ads from major brands on websites that spread false claims on topics such as vaccines, COVID-19, climate change and elections. After being contacted by ProPublica, Google removed ads from at least 14 websites identified in the investigation, and the company continues to review the sites and pages ProPublica shared.



ProPublica revealed thriving cybermarkets where fraudsters buy and sell stolen personal information for unemployment insurance fraud. (Cath Virginia, special to ProPublica)

Apple Removes Cyber Fraud Tools From App Store; Authorities Raid Global Cyberscamming Compounds

In September, ProPublica uncovered a lucrative global scam known as "pig butchering," in which people from across Asia are tricked into traveling to Cambodia, Laos or Myanmar for seemingly well-paid jobs that instead trap them inside cyberfraud sweatshops run by Chinese criminal syndicates. Once trapped, they are forced to use fake profiles to target victims online, gain their trust and convince them to deposit money into fake online brokerages controlled by criminal groups. If they resist, they face beatings, food deprivation or electric shocks. Ten days after ProPublica's investigation, Apple removed two versions of the app used in the scam from its App Store. Authorities also stepped up their efforts to crack down on criminal syndicates, including police raids in at least three Cambodian cities that freed thousands of workers from buildings where they were said to have been detained against their will.

Instagram Removes More Than 300 Fraudulent Verifications

In August, ProPublica uncovered the largest-known Instagram verification scheme, which likely generated millions in revenue for its operators. Users, including OnlyFans models, crypto entrepreneurs and platic surgeons, paid five figures to get blue check marks on their profiles, duping platforms like Meta, Spotify, Google and Apple Music in the process. The coveted blue checkmark is supposed to provide verification

that anyone who bears one is who they claim to be, potentially boosting prospects for status and endorsements. The scheme operators created fake musician profiles for their clients in order to trick Meta into verifying their accounts, underscoring how easily major social, search and music platforms can be exploited. After ProPublica started asking questions, Instagram's parent company Meta removed blue checks from more than 300 accounts, and Spotify removed over 100 fake musicians.

Congressional Chair Enlists Apple and Google to Help Fight Cybercriminals

In July 2021, ProPublica investigated what may turn out to be one of the biggest frauds in U.S. history: bogus claims for unemployment insurance benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the messaging app Telegram, scammers traded tips for filing fake jobless claims and established a thriving marketplace for buying and selling stolen identities. Citing our reporting, U.S. Rep. James E. Clyburn, chair of the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, asked Apple and Google to help stop fraud against U.S. taxpayers on Telegram, which is distributed via their smartphone app stores. In a letter to the company CEOs, Clyburn pointed out that enabling fraud violates their own policies, which forbid apps that facilitate or promote illegal activities, and he asked the companies for records showing what they know about the problem. Telegram told ProPublica that it's working to expand its terms of service and moderation efforts to restrict and combat misuse of its messaging platform.



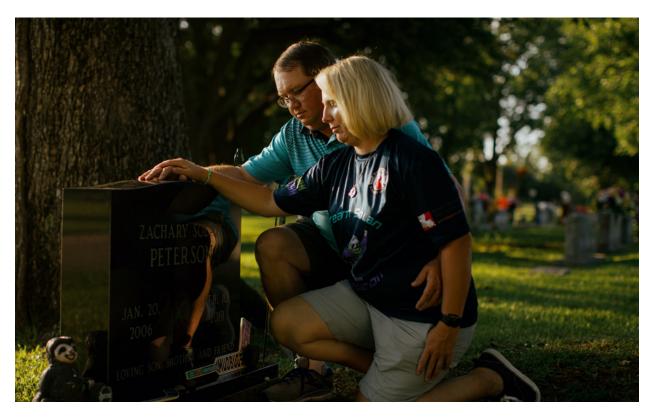
Of 34 supervisors in the Elkhart, Indiana, Police Department, 28 had been disciplined. (Anna Vignet for ProPublica)

Police Officer Pleads Guilty to Beating Handcuffed Man

A 2018 series with the South Bend Tribune in Indiana uncovered shocking misconduct by members of the Elkhart County Police Department, including an incident in which two police officers repeatedly punched a man who was handcuffed to a chair. The officers were merely reprimanded by the police chief for going "a little overboard," and the incident only became public after ProPublica and the Tribune began investigating and obtained video evidence. In late August 2022, one of the police officers pleaded guilty in a federal civil rights case. Cory Newland was subsequently sentenced to 15 months in prison. The other officer is also facing a federal civil rights charge, and his trial is still pending.

Michigan Proposes 32 Juvenile Justice Reforms

In July 2020, ProPublica partnered with the Detroit Free Press and Bridge, a nonprofit newsroom in Michigan, to report on Grace, a 15-year-old who was sent to juvenile detention for not doing her online coursework. Our story brought national attention to her plight, leading to her release that same month and the creation of the Task Force on Juvenile Justice Reform to review Michigan's juvenile justice system. In July 2022, the task force made 32 recommendations that aim to transform what happens when young people get in trouble with the law, including keeping low-level offenses out of the courts, limiting when children can be detained and ensuring juveniles have access to attorneys trained in juvenile matters.



Ronnie and Bridget Peterson visit the grave of their 13-year-old son, Solan, who died by suicide while in solitary confinement in Louisiana's Ware Youth Center in 2019. (Bryan Tarnowski for ProPublica, NBC News and The Marshall Project)

Detention Center That Illegally Jailed Kids Gets Oversight Board

The juvenile justice system in Rutherford County, Tennessee, illegally arrested and jailed children for years, locking up kids in nearly half the cases referred to juvenile court, ProPublica and Nashville Public Radio reported in 2021. In one incident, 11 kids were handcuffed and arrested at school for watching boys scuffle and not stepping in to stop it, with four of the children booked in juvenile jail. Children were often jailed for vague "crimes" that did not exist, and many were held in solitary confinement. The county also jailed a disproportionately high percentage of Black children. After the story's publication, amid a growing outcry from community leaders and Tennessee lawmakers, Judge Donna Scott Davenport, who oversaw the system, announced in January that she would step down rather than run for reelection. In June 2022, the Rutherford County Juvenile Detention Center announced that it will be overseen by a five-member board rather than a judge.

Louisiana Limits Solitary Confinement for Teens

In March a ProPublica investigation, co-reported with The Marshall Project and NBC News, revealed deplorable conditions at the Acadiana Center for Youth at St. Martinville, Louisiana, a high-security lockup for teenagers. Teens at the center were kept in solitary confinement around the clock and shackled when they were allowed to leave their cells. They did not receive court-ordered counseling, nor any education, in violation of state and federal law. Louisiana lawmakers passed a bill in April, citing our reporting, that would place strict limits on the use of solitary confinement. Louisiana's governor signed the reforms into law in June, including limiting young people to no more than eight hours in isolation unless they continue to pose a physical threat to themselves or others. The state iuvenile justice agency is also now required to check on their mental health and to notify their parents or guardians within the first hours of placing children in solitary confinement.

Army Reviewing Rules for Military Justice System

U.S. Army soldiers accused of sexual assault are less than half as likely to be detained while awaiting trial than those accused of offenses like drug use and disobeying an officer, according to an August investigation by ProPublica and The Texas Tribune. Now U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, whose district includes one of the nation's largest Army posts, is calling for hearings to examine the military's pretrial confinement system, which gives commanders the discretion to detain service members facing criminal charges ahead of trial. The Army also said its pretrial confinement rules are "currently under revision" in a statement to Military Times, which is partnering with ProPublica and the Tribune to report on military justice.

DOJ Confirms Our Reporting on Subhuman Prison Conditions

As the Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting and ProPublica reported in 2019, the Mississippi prison system is plagued by gang control, abuse and subhuman living conditions, which lawmakers had known about for years. After lawmakers and prison reformers demanded an investigation in a letter that cited our series, in 2020 the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division opened a probe into four Mississippi prisons. In April 2022 the department released its findings: conditions at Parchman state prison violate the Constitution.

In its report, the DOJ confirmed our findings that the prison had failed to protect inmates from violence or provide adequate mental health care, while penitentiary officials had subjected prisoners to prolonged solitary confinement in egregious conditions. DOJ officials also said Mississippi's corrections commissioner has implemented changes.

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT

"The story wasn't obvious at first. We'd read news reports about the death of a young soldier named Asia Graham who, before her death, had accused another soldier of sexual assault. The idea to look into pretrial confinement started when an advocate working with Graham's family told me the man she'd accused of sexual assault was still not in custody at that time. After combing an Army database of court-martial records, we learned this was very common: Soldiers accused of sexual assault were not put in pretrial confinement as often as soldiers accused of disobeying a commander or drug and burglary crimes. So this was a real example of marrying shoe leather reporting with data reporting — how data can bolster the stories you're finding in the field."

Vianna Davila,reporter with the ProPublica-TexasTribune Investigative Initiative



Texas Department of Public Safety special agents apprehend five undocumented immigrants from Honduras who were caught on private property in Kinney County as part of Operation Lone Star. (Verónica G. Cárdenas for ProPublica/The Texas Tribune)

Justice Department Investigates Texas Border Initiative for Civil Rights Violations

In March, ProPublica, The Texas Tribune and The Marshall Project published a joint investigation into Operation Lone Star, a multibillion-dollar border security initiative launched by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott that deploys thousands of Department of Public Safety troopers and National Guard members. At one time, the operation cost taxpayers more than \$2.5 million a week. As state officials touted the operation's accomplishments — thousands of arrests, multiple drug seizures and numerous referrals of unauthorized immigrants for deportation — we found that these numbers included crimes with no connection to the border. And while Abbott claimed that Operation Lone Star was aimed at Mexican cartels and smugglers; prosecutions of lone immigrant men on criminal trespassing charges make up the largest share of the initiative's arrests. The Department of Public Service stopped counting some charges, including cockfighting, sexual assault and stalking, when we began asking questions about their connections to border security. Our reporting sparked nationwide attention, including op-eds written about our work in the Washington Post, Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News and the Austin American Statesman. In July, Pro-Publica and The Texas Tribune learned that the U.S. Department of Justice opened an investigation into Operation Lone Star for alleged civil rights violations.

Maine Hires Its First Public Defenders

Until 2022, Maine was the only state in the country without a public defender system. Instead, as <u>The Maine Monitor and ProPublica reported in 2020</u>, the state's poorest defendants had access to private attorneys contracted by a state office — attorneys with disproportionately high levels of professional misconduct and criminal convictions. In April 2022, state lawmakers passed a budget to hire its first five public defenders. The attorneys will work as a "rural public defender unit" to travel to courts across the state and provide legal representation to defendants who cannot afford their own lawyer.

Pennsylvania Settles Case Over Illegal Traffic Stops

In 2018, ProPublica and The Philadelphia Inquirer reported on tactics used by Pennsylvania police officers to help Immigration and Customs Enforcement round up immigrants for deportation, including the questioning and arrests of Latino drivers during traffic stops. In April, Pennsylvania agreed to pay \$865,000 to settle a federal lawsuit alleging that its state troopers routinely and unconstitutionally pulled over Latino drivers, demanded their "papers" and held them and their passengers for pickup by federal immigration authorities. The complaint, filed by the Pennsylvania ACLU, partially drew from our reporting.



Youness Elalam said he was disciplined more harshly than other officers in the Revere, Massachusetts, Police Department because he is Muslim. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

Civil Rights Lawsuit Filed Over Teen's Arrest in Early Days of Pandemic

As the pandemic roared across the country in 2020, governments along the Texas-Mexico border took a hard line to limit COVID-19's spread. A December 2020 investigation with The Texas Tribune found that police were often deployed to enforce emergency stay-home orders, resulting in hundreds jailed and nearly 2,000 people ticketed. Our investigation featured Socrates Shawn, a high school student arrested for driving between his parents' houses as part of a joint-custody agreement. We found that outcomes for violating COVID-19 orders varied from community to community, with some people like Shawn left in legal limbo for months as they fought the fines. Citing our investigation, in June 2022 the Texas Civil Rights Project filed a federal lawsuit against the city of Progreso and two police officers on behalf of Socrates, alleging that the police had no reasonable suspicion to stop him and lacked probable cause for his arrest. Attorneys representing Progreso have disputed the claims.

Federal Officials Criticize City's Ban on Hiring Outsiders for Police Chief

When the mayor of Revere, Massachusetts, began looking for a new police chief in 2017, he wanted a leader to clean up what he described as a "toxic culture" within the department. An investigation by WBUR and ProPublica in August, however, showed that a city ordinance forced him to promote from within, despite none of the internal candidates passing an assessment for the job. With no outside candidates allowed for consideration, the mayor promoted David Callahan, who as a lieutenant had been accused of bullying and sexually harassing a patrolman and creating "an atmosphere of fear" in the department. (Callahan disputes the allegations.) Days after the story was published, both U.S. senators from Massachusetts criticized the city's ban on hiring outsiders as police chiefs, while the state's top federal law enforcement official said that the restriction may violate civil rights law by making it harder for women and people of color to attain leadership positions.



Business and Labor

McKinsey never told the Food and Drug Administration it was working for opioid makers while also working for the agency. (Alex Bandoni/ProPublica; Source Images: Getty Images)

Intuit to Pay \$141 Million to Customers Tricked Into Paying for TurboTax

In 2019, we showed how TurboTax lures people into using the software with promises of free filing, only for them to discover later they have to pay to finish the process. In response to our reporting, the Federal Trade Commision began investigating Intuit, the maker of TurboTax, to determine whether this violated laws against deceptive practices in commerce. In a March 2022 complaint, the FTC accused Intuit of deceiving people "after they have invested time and effort gathering and inputting into TurboTax their sensitive personal and financial information," and the agency asked a federal court to intervene to stop the company from claiming in ads that Americans can file for "free" using its service. In May 2022, the company reached a \$141 million settlement with state attorneys general to pay up to \$90 apiece to more than 4 million people who paid for TurboTax even though they were eligible to receive it for free.

New Law Takes Aim at Private-Sector Conflicts of Interest

For more than a decade, the consulting firm McKinsey & Company advised both the drug regulatory branch of the Food and Drug Administration and pharmaceutical companies seeking to skirt FDA regulations, ProPublica reported in 2021. Yet McKinsey never told the agency about its work with drugmakers. The firm maintains its work for the FDA did not pose a conflict of interest and that it was not obligated to disclose its work for drug companies to its government clients.

Citing our reporting, a bipartisan group of senators introduced a bill in April to ensure that federal contractors disclose conflicts of interest arising from private-sector work. Under the legislation, federal agencies would require prospective contractors to disclose business relationships with "public, private, domestic and foreign entities" that might pose a conflict of interest. In December, Congress passed the bill and President Joe Biden signed it into law.



Sisters Jo and Joy Banner with a rendering of how a grain elevator proposed by the agricultural company Greenfield will look behind their community. (Akasha Rabut, special to ProPublica)

Court Strikes Down Law That Gave Tax Breaks to Casinos

In June, The Press of Atlantic City and ProPublica reported how, despite growing profits, casino operators used predictions of "grave danger" to convince the New Jersey Legislature to cut their taxes in 2021. As they pushed for tax relief — denying millions of dollars to Atlantic City, its school district and the county — the casinos' parent companies were also spending billions to purchase online gaming companies, acquisitions that assured even more revenue. In August, a Superior Court judge in New Jersey struck down the law granting tax breaks to casinos, saying that the measure was passed on dubious grounds and violated the state Constitution.

Company Ordered to Study Possible Harm to Black Heritage Sites

In May we reported on how the proposed development of an agricultural operation in Wallace, Louisiana by the company Greenfield could disrupt historic sites, including the graves of enslaved African Americans and a restored plantation that serves as a museum about slavery. When a historian at the consulting firm hired by Greenfield flagged the potential harms, the firm deleted her findings from its report. After our story, the agency that oversees federal preservation law wrote to the Army Corps of Engineers demanding action. The Corps concluded that the report commissioned by Greenfield was "insufficient" and forced the company to produce a new survey of its impacts. Greenfield has said that its project will not harm any cultural sites.



As other countries outlawed asbestos, workers in a New York plant were "swimming" in it. (Rich-Joseph Facun for ProPublica)

Lawmakers and Advocates Call for Asbestos Ban

The dangers of asbestos have been well known for decades but, unlike dozens of other countries, the U.S. never fully banned the carcinogen. An October investigation by ProPublica and NPR News examined dangerous working conditions at an OxyChem chlorine plant that continued to use asbestos until it closed in 2021, finding that workers were "swimming" in it. Days later, members of Congress renewed calls to finally ban asbestos, with five House members newly signing on to co-sponsor a bill that would permanently restrict its use. In addition, the American Public Health Association called for chlorine plants to have greater oversight from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and questioned whether the facilities should be allowed in a special program that currently exempts them from random, unannounced inspections by OSHA.

Senators Ask Chase to Explain Lawsuit Blitz on Customers

More than a decade ago, JPMorgan Chase said it would stop suing indebted credit card customers and, during the pandemic, the bank pledged to pause mortgage, auto and credit card payments. But a January investigation by ProPublica and The Capitol Forum showed that, since early 2020, Chase filed lawsuits against thousands of credit card customers who fell behind on their payments.

As part of this blitz of lawsuits, we reported that Chase also resumed the dubious practice of robo-signing, effectively rubber-stamping affidavits without following required procedures. Weeks later, five members of the Senate Banking Committee and its chairman, Sen. Sherrod Brown — citing our reporting — asked the bank's CEO to explain its debt collection practices. Chase said its process follows the letter of the law.



Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council speaks at the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland. (Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call/AP Images)

Congress Demands Probe Into Right-Wing Think Tank's Church Status

The Family Research Council, a Washington, D.C.based nonprofit that advocates for Christian-right policies, successfully petitioned the IRS to change its classification from a tax-exempt charity to a church, ProPublica reported in July. The organization, which in recent years advocated to overturn Roe v. Wade and pushed for anti-LGBTQ legislation, joins a growing number of activist groups changing their tax status as a way to evade financial scrutiny. The organization is no longer required to file a public tax return, which would disclose the names of board members, large payments to independent contractors and grants the organization has made. Unlike with other charities, IRS investigators can't initiate an audit on a church unless a high-level Treasury Department official has approved the investigation. Citing ProPublica's investigation, 40 members of Congress sent a letter to the IRS and Treasury asking for a swift review of the designation and urging the IRS to improve its review process to find abuses of the tax code. The Family Research Council did not respond to ProPublica's reporting.

U.S. Senators Call for Scrutiny of Private Equity's Incursion Into Fishing

In July, ProPublica and The New Bedford Light investigated how private equity and foreign investors are transforming New England's fishing industry, delivering profits to corporations at the expense of local fishermen. Taking advantage of lax antitrust rules, private equity firms have been able to consolidate the limited number of fish allowed to be caught, squeezing out smaller fishermen in the process. Blue Harvest Fisheries, the largest permit holder in New England, has been acquiring vessels, fishing permits and processing facilities, allowing it to effectively control the supply chain. Blue Harvest said that the Coast Guard had approved its "capital and ownership structure" in advance and that the company has submitted all required notices and reporting materials to regulatory authorities. In response to our investigation, three U.S. senators called for greater federal scrutiny of private equity's incursion into the fishing industry. In September, Department of Justice lawyers reached out to several industry fishing groups to begin gathering information as the agency explores possible antitrust violations.



Environment

Denka Performance Elastomer has taken over the former DuPont chemical facility in LaPlace, Louisiana. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)

Louisiana Cancels Permits for Polluting Petrochemical Plants

In 2019, ProPublica partnered with The Times-Picayune | The Advocate on a series about Louisiana's "Cancer Alley," a stretch of the Mississippi River with a high concentration of petrochemical facilities. We found that toxic air pollution in these predominantly Black and poor communities is rising and the estimated air quality relative to its peers is getting worse. In September 2022, two of the plastics plants proposing to build in the area and profiled in our reporting — South Louisiana Methanol and Formosa — saw their permits canceled by the state and terminated by a district court, respectively. In October, the EPA issued a letter accusing Louisiana regulators of neglecting Black residents' concerns about toxic air pollution and urged the state to move children out of a school where monitors found extreme levels of a cancer-causing chemical.

Controversial Plant to Pay Nearly \$1 Million Fine

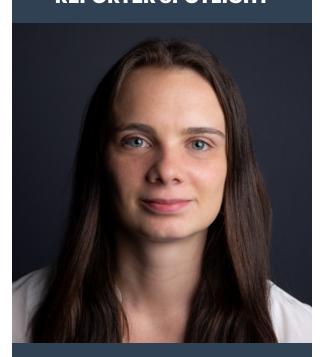
A September ProPublica investigation showed how industrial plants in Birmingham, Alabama, have polluted the air and land in its historic Black communities for over a century. Taking a deep dive into Bluestone Coke — a company owned by the family of West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, which processes coal into a fuel called coke - the story revealed how the company failed to make crucial repairs to its facility, accelerating the release of cancer-causing chemicals. In December, Bluestone Coke signed a consent decree agreeing to pay a \$925,000 fine. If the consent decree is approved by a judge, the penalty against Bluestone Coke would be the largest fine in the agency's history, and half of the penalty would go to funding community improvement projects in the areas around the plant. The consent decree would not require Bluestone to admit to wrongdoing.

EPA and Local Officials Fight Toxic Air Pollution

A groundbreaking ProPublica report in November 2021 revealed that air pollution from industrial plants has elevated the cancer risk of 74 million Americans, more than a fifth of the population.

- Weeks after the investigation was published, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan pledged to ramp up enforcement activities. In January 2022, he announced a significant expansion of air monitoring in some of the country's most polluted neighborhoods. The agency also launched a new Pollution Accountability Team to improve the EPA's capacity to measure contaminants. These efforts are being focused on areas in the South that ProPublica identified as having some of the highest cancer risks in the nation, and over \$600,000 is being invested toward air-monitoring equipment across the region.
- The EPA announced a new wave of inspections of industrial polluters. In November, the EPA granted Mississippi \$500,000 to conduct air monitoring in Pascagoula, one of the cities our analysis found to have hazardous emissions from industrial sites in the area.
- The EPA held town hall meetings in several of the communities we identified as having cancer risks elevated by pollution from nearby industrial facilities, including the small town of Verona, Missouri. At that meeting, Mayor Joseph Heck demanded that government officials look into the local cancer rate, and in March, the state Health Department confirmed the mayor's fears: The rate of non-Hodgkin lymphoma in the Verona ZIP code is more than twice as high as that of the surrounding county and state. The EPA announced in October that it will install three air monitors and operate a mobile monitoring vehicle to begin monitoring the air in Verona.
- ProPublica and The Texas Tribune reported that the cancer risk from ethylene oxide is particularly acute in Laredo, Texas, home to a factory that emits far more of the pollutant than any other facility in the country. In January the EPA formally rejected Texas' more lenient, less protective standard for ethylene oxide, sticking with its own scientific conclusions a move that clears the way for significant reductions in emissions nationwide. In August, the Laredo City Council approved \$105,360 for a new air monitoring program.

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT



"To reach hot spot residents, we reported on the ground in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, Kentucky, Delaware and West Virginia; mailed postcards to 8,800 homes; connected with churches, libraries, gardening clubs and bowling alleys with calls and flyers; held a virtual Q&A and attended cancer support groups to listen and inform. We heard from more than 1,000 impacted residents. Many had been unaware of their risks, while others in the know helped shape our guide for those learning about their risks for the first time, filling critical information gaps."

-Maya Miller, engagement reporter

Officials Crackdown on Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

When a deadly winter storm hit Texas in February 2021, leaving millions of residents without electricity in freezing weather, a series by ProPublica, The Texas Tribune and NBC News showed how it unleashed a carbon monoxide poisoning catastrophe, with failures at every level of government. At least 17 people died from inhaling the colorless, odorless gas after desperate residents fired up generators, grills, fireplaces and car engines to keep their families warm.

- One story in the series detailed how portable generators are among the deadliest consumer products, with people left vulnerable by a government that fails to enforce safety rules and an industry that's allowed to regulate itself. Two months later, in February 2022, the Consumer Product Safety Commission announced plans to recommend new mandatory rules to make portable generators safer, contending that manufacturers have not voluntarily done enough to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning deaths caused by their products.
- In June 2022 the House Committee on Oversight and Reform opened an investigation into why many generators have not received potentially lifesaving safety upgrades. ProPublica obtained the report in September, which detailed the failure of an automatic shut-off switch to prevent three deaths in a Louisiana family profiled in our investigation, despite industry claims that the switch is sufficient to prevent generator-related deaths.
- Another story revealed that, following a 911 call about a Houston family that had fainted, first responders failed to enter the home and left when nobody answered the door. The decision resulted in a couple and their two children inside being exposed to the lethal gas for an additional three hours, with a mother and daughter dying from carbon monoxide poisoning. The Houston Fire Department opened an investigation into its botched response, and this year a firefighter was disciplined for misconduct in the case.







Portable generators are among the deadliest consumer products. (Laila Milevski/ProPublica)



Women prepare salmon in Toppenish, Washington, top, before a ceremony held by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. They are among several tribes with a deep connection to salmon in the Columbia River Basin. (Tony Schick/OPB)

A laboratory analyst, bottom, processes salmon filets for testing at a lab in Washington. (Kristyna Wentz-Graff/OPB)

Lawmakers Call for Protections Against Toxic Salmon

In the Pacific Northwest, the U.S. government promised Native tribes in the Columbia River basin that their access to salmon and their way of life would be preserved. Although tribal members and researchers have been raising concerns about toxic contamination in salmon for decades, federal and state governments have failed to consistently monitor the waters for pollution. For an investigation published in November by ProPublica and Oregon Public Broadcasting, our reporters sent 50 fish to a lab to be tested and found levels of contaminants that, when consumed at average tribal rates, would be high enough to put many people at risk of adverse health impacts. In December, state and federal lawmakers, citing our reporting, called for environmental policy changes and increased funding to address toxic contamination in salmon.





Housing

Fontana Village, top, a Baltimore-area apartment complex is owned by Jared Kushner's real estate company, Kushner Companies. (Philip Montgomery for The New York Times)

Kamiia Warren, bottom, once lived at Cove Village, the Kushner Companies property in Essex, Maryland, (Philip Montgomery for The New York Times)

Kushner Company to Pay Millions for Shoddy Apartments and Rent Abuses

A 2017 ProPublica story co-published with The New York Times Magazine 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. The 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. After the story, tenants brought a class-action lawsuit against the firm's property management arm, which was settled in September 2022. The property management subsidiary agreed to pay a \$3.25 million fine to Maryland and to reimburse many

of the tens of thousands of tenants for excessive fees and for rent they were forced to pay over the past decade despite serious maintenance problems.





Louisa Keawe, who has been on the waitlist for a homesteading program for Native Hawaiians since 2010, said the system favors those with wealth. (Cindy Ellen Russell/Honolulu Star-Advertiser)

Louisiana Halts Lawsuits Against Hurricane Katrina Survivors

After Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana gave money to 32,000 homeowners to raise their storm-damaged homes as a way to prevent future flooding. Representatives from the federally funded Road Home program told people they could use the money to repair, rather than elevate, their homes, recipients of the funds said, even though the government later claimed this violated their grant agreements. In May, ProPublica and The Advocate | The Times-Picayune examined how the relief program had inadvertently punished the communities it intended to help. The joint investigation revealed that, more than a decade later, thousands of struggling homeowners are now being sued by the state for using the grant money to rebuild their homes. The lawsuits seek \$103 million from recipients of Road Home elevation grants, the majority of which were given to people in lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Days after the story was published, Louisiana paused its collection efforts against hurricane survivors. Officials also said they are urging the federal government to approve a settlement that will allow the state to drop the lawsuits entirely.

Lawmakers Approve \$600 Million to Fix Housing Program for Native Hawaiians

In 2020, The Honolulu Star-Advertiser and ProPublica investigated the failure of the Hawaii Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to return Native Hawaiians to ancestral lands, as required by a 1921 federal law. Under the program, beneficiaries — those at least 50% Hawaiian — would get a lease from a 200,000acre land trust and could either build or purchase a home on the parcel. It was one of the federal government's early attempts at reparations for past wrongs. But the department had focused on sprawling homes that are too expensive for many beneficiaries. In addition, Congress passed special legislation that allowed properties to go to private parties rather than a trust established to repatriate the land. As a result, the state had awarded just 8,400 residential leases, with a waitlist of 23,000 people. More than 2,000 people had died while waiting. In May of 2022, lawmakers passed legislation to put \$600 million toward fixing the program. The funds will be used to develop homestead lots, acquire land and offer assistance through programs like down-payment assistance and rent relief.



John Stepan's rent stayed relatively steady in a building that did not use RealPage's pricing software. (Jovelle Tamayo for ProPublica)

Federal Government Investigates Real Estate Company for Collusion With Landlords

As rents soar across the country, ProPublica uncovered price-setting software that helps the nation's largest landlords push rents as high as feasible. Owned by real estate company RealPage, the software, known as YieldStar, suggests new rents daily to landlords based on data collected by the company from landlords who are its clients. In November, the chair of a U.S. Senate committee asked the Federal Trade Commission to review whether YieldStar violates antitrust laws. Weeks later, 17 members of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a letter to the Department of Justice and the FTC asking the agencies to investigate. By late November, the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division opened an investigation into whether RealPage is facilitating collusion among landlords. RealPage told ProPublica that its software prioritizes a property's own internal supply and demand dynamics over such external factors as competitors' rents.

Clean Energy Lender Stops Making High-Interest Loans in Missouri

A home-loan program in Missouri called Property Assessed Clean Energy, or PACE, lets borrowers finance energy-efficient home improvements, like solar panels, by repaying their loans through their annual property tax bills. In April 2021, we reported on the program's lack of effective oversight, which allowed private companies to charge high interest rates and put dozens of borrowers at risk of losing their homes. Soon after, lawmakers in Missouri began exploring ways to rein in the clean-energy loan program. The state enacted a measure to strengthen oversight of programs that make PACE loans and provide borrowers with more complete information about the potential impact of loans. In August 2022, one of Missouri's biggest clean energy lenders cited these reforms as a factor in its decision to stop making PACE loans in the state. Citing concerns from our reporting, Ohio lawmakers pushed for additional consumer protections to any "clean energy" lending programs in the state.



Iris Foster-Ray lost control of her DTE debt during a period where one of her twin daughters was ill and her family was struggling with high medical bills. (Nick Hagen for ProPublica)

Lawmakers Push Back Against Power Shut-Offs and Debt Sales in Detroit

During the early stages of the pandemic, Detroit's electric service provider, DTE Energy, said that it would not disconnect the accounts of people who could not pay their bills. A March investigation by Outlier Media and ProPublica found that, after a three-month moratorium, DTE ramped up power shut-offs, disconnecting customers 80,600 times in 2020 and 178,200 times in 2021. Weeks after our investigation, the Detroit City Council passed a resolution calling for DTE to enact a one-year pause on power shut-offs.

An August story revealed that DTE had been selling years-old customer debt to a debt collection agency, with severe consequences for thousands of Detroiters who were sued and had their wages garnished. Members of Congress introduced a resolution recognizing access to utility services such as electricity and water as a human right. The resolution also calls for a ban on the sale of household debt.

Instead of Letting Developers Tear Down Motels, Reno Seeks to Buy Them as Affordable Housing

City officials in Reno, Nevada, let an out-of-state casino owner, Jeff Jacobs, displace hundreds of low-income residents so he could build a proposed entertainment complex, ProPublica reported in November 2021. Jacobs demolished motels over the past five years, razing nearly 600 units that provided shelter for residents. Reno's mayor had long supported the motel demolitions, but she changed course after Pro-Publica's investigation. In January 2022, as part of an effort to increase affordable housing, Mayor Hillary Schieve announced plans to acquire and rehabilitate motels through the Reno Housing Authority. After widespread criticism of the demolitions, Jacobs also announced he would be willing to donate up to \$15 million in land for an affordable housing and public parking project, a donation that would be contingent on the housing authority financing the project and the city acquiring additional land.



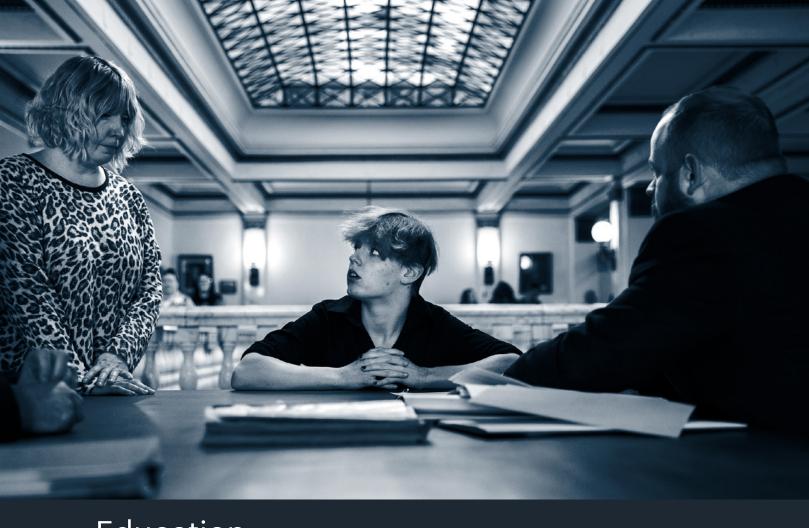
Bridgette Carter, at the far right in the image above, with family and friends at her daughter Aaleya's grave. Aaleya, 12, died after being swept into a drainage system. (William Widmer, special to ProPublica)

Below right: A road flooded in New Jersey after the remnants of Hurricane Ida blew through in 2021. (Karsten Moran/Redux)

HUD Addresses Storm Drain Dangers

In December 2021, ProPublica reported on the alarming number of people who have drowned after getting sucked into storm drains during floods. Our story also revealed the broader failures of American infrastructure and local government: Many of the country's storm drains were designed decades ago and based on outdated levels of expected rainfall, yet most cities and towns have not updated their storm drain designs to prevent such deaths, even when local officials are aware of the danger. Prompted by the article, in April 2022, the Department of Housing and Urban Development added language to its guidance for HUD housing developments stating that developers should secure potentially dangerous storm drains.





Education

Jennifer Fee, left, and her 17-year-old child, Blake, talk to a prosecutor at the Tazewell County Courthouse. Blake had gotten a ticket for having a vaping device at school. (Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune)

Illinois Investigation Finds Civil Rights Violations in Student Ticketing

Across Illinois, police ticket thousands of students a year for vaping, disorderly conduct, truancy and other violations that would have previously landed them in the principal's office. An investigation by ProPublica and the Chicago Tribune in April found that officials are referring students to the police for disciplinary reasons, throwing children as young as 10 into a legal system designed for adults. Hours after the story was published, Illinois State Superintendent of Education Carmen Ayala urged schools to stop working with police to ticket students for misbehavior. In a letter to superintendents and principals, she also said that the

board intends to survey school districts to learn more about their disciplinary practices.

By May, several schools halted or reevaluated their policies, while the Illinois comptroller's office banned local governments from using a state program to collect debt from students who have been ticketed for truancy. The Illinois attorney general opened an investigation into one of the state's largest school districts for possible civil rights violations, and in September, the results of that investigation confirmed that a disproportionate number of tickets were issued not just to students of color but also to those with disabilities. District officials deny that race factors into their disciplinary decisions.



Lou Whiting, a nonbinary student at Granbury High School, said, "I've had my fair share of active hate against me, and my friends, and my community." (Shelby Tauber for ProPublica/The Texas Tribune/NBC News)

University's Handling of Sexual Assault Under Federal Investigation

ProPublica's 2021 investigation of Liberty University's handling of sexual assault on its campus found that the evangelical Christian school ignored reports of rape and threatened to punish accusers for breaking its moral code. Breaking the Liberty Way code, which prohibits drinking and fraternizing with the opposite sex, could lead to fines, required community service or even expulsion. Cases were dismissed, and alleged victims were discouraged from filing complaints. Some who came forward were encouraged to pray instead of reporting their cases.

Citing possible violations of federal law, three senators called on the U.S. Department of Education to investigate Liberty's handling of sexual assault claims after the article was published. In April 2022, the Education Department began an investigation into Liberty, whose students received hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid. The school did not respond to the allegations and pledged its "full cooperation" with the investigation.

Federal Government Investigates Ban on LGBTQ-Themed Books

An investigation published in March by ProPublica, The Texas Tribune and NBC News revealed that Jeremy Glenn, a superintendent in North Texas, instructed school librarians to remove books with LGBTQ themes. In December, the U.S. Education Department's Office for Civil Rights launched an investigation into the school district; it's the first investigation of its kind explicitly tied to the national movement to ban school library books dealing with sexuality and gender. Neither Glenn nor the district have responded to ProPublica's requests for comment.





Michelle Leahy, a teacher at Sky Valley Education Center, developed uterine cancer and other illnesses from toxic chemicals in the building. (Rajah Bose, special to The Seattle Times)

Washington State Plans Oversight for Private Special Education Schools

Washington state's special education system includes a network of privately run schools, which advertise expensive therapeutic services to public school districts to help students with severe disabilities. But once the students enter these schools, public accountability and transparency stops. A November investigation by ProPublica and The Seattle Times uncovered years of reports about abuse and lax academics at the largest chain of these private schools, Northwest School of Innovative Learning, in which schools operated with virtually no curriculum and staff so poorly trained that they often resorted to restraining and isolating students. In December, citing our reporting, the state announced it was working on legislation to expand oversight of private special education schools.

Lawmakers Fund the Removal of Toxic Chemicals From School

For years, staff and students at Sky Valley Education Center, an alternative public school in Monroe, Washington, had strange symptoms: cognitive problems, skin cysts, girls as young as 6 hitting puberty. A January investigation by The Seattle Times and ProPublica revealed that the health problems are due to harmful conditions in the building, including high levels of carbon dioxide and chemicals known as PCBs that the Environmental Protection Agency has linked to cancers and other illnesses. The district said that it addressed the chemicals appropriately. In response to our reporting, state lawmakers dedicated \$1.5 million in March to removing toxic fluorescent lights from schools, as well as \$125,000 to studying environmental hazards and creating new standards to protect students.



Healthcare

Top: (Mark Pernice, special to ProPublica)

Bottom right: Latoya Johnson Keelen's implant stopped functioning when it failed to restart after being plugged in. (Lynsey Weatherspoon for ProPublica)

Congress Investigates FDA's Handling of Dangerous Heart Device

In August 2021, ProPublica examined the HeartWare Ventricular Assist Device, a mechanical pump embedded into the hearts of thousands of people with severe cardiac failure. Two months prior, the Food and Drug Administration and the product's maker had removed the HeartWare device from the market, noting that a competing heart pump had better patient outcomes — but we knew that wasn't the full story. Our reporters found that the device had serious problems that the FDA knew about for years, including thousands of horrific deaths and injuries caused by sudden malfunctions. As people continued to be implanted with HeartWare, the government relied on the device makers to fix the problems voluntarily

rather than compelling them to do so. Citing our reporting, Congress opened an investigation in March into the FDA's handling of the HeartWare pump. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, chair of a House oversight subcommittee, requested information on how the FDA made regulatory decisions related to the device and why it didn't take further action.



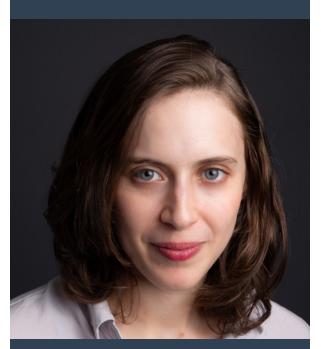
Congress and Industry Leaders Call for Crackdown on Hospice Fraud

In November, ProPublica and The New Yorker exposed how the design of the Medicare benefit incentivizes profit-seeking hospices to cut corners on care and target patients who are not actually dying. Less than three weeks later, members of Congress called on the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate hospice fraud. The story's findings were also cited by lawmakers in New York, where Gov. Kathy Hochul is considering signing legislation to outlaw the creation of new for-profit hospice providers in the state. The four national hospice lobbying associations echoed demands for reform and asked the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to institute targeted moratoriums in high-growth areas.

Florida Program for Injured Newborns Expands Payments to More Families and Pays \$51 Million in Whistleblower Settlement

In April 2021, the Miami Herald and ProPublica reported on Florida's Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Association, or NICA, a program designed to reduce doctors' malpractice bills that strips parents of brain-damaged newborns of their right to sue. Instead, the program offers a one-time payment and promises to cover medical expenses throughout the child's life. Yet NICA has frequently denied or delayed help for struggling families. The investigation spurred comprehensive reforms to better support families in the program, including retroactive compensation of \$150,000. Families of children who died, however, were left out, even as many of those families spent themselves into poverty trying to keep their children alive. In March 2022, Florida lawmakers voted to extend the \$150,000 stipends to parents whose children were once enrolled in NICA but had been dropped from the rolls when the children died. In November, NICA agreed to pay \$51 million to settle a whistleblower complaint that alleged the program grew assets of nearly \$1.7 billion partly by dumping caregiving costs onto Medicaid.

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT



"Most health care narratives focus on portraits of patients and their families. I wanted to expose the systemic profiteering of the hospice industry through an unconventional perspective: over the shoulder of one of its marketers. This allowed me to bring readers inside the industry's predatory recruitment schemes to target vulnerable families, including lowincome Black patients in the South."

—Ava Kofman, reporter on ProPublica's national desk



Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in rural Anna, Illinois. At least one advocacy organization called for the state to close the facility. (Whitney Curtis for ProPublica)

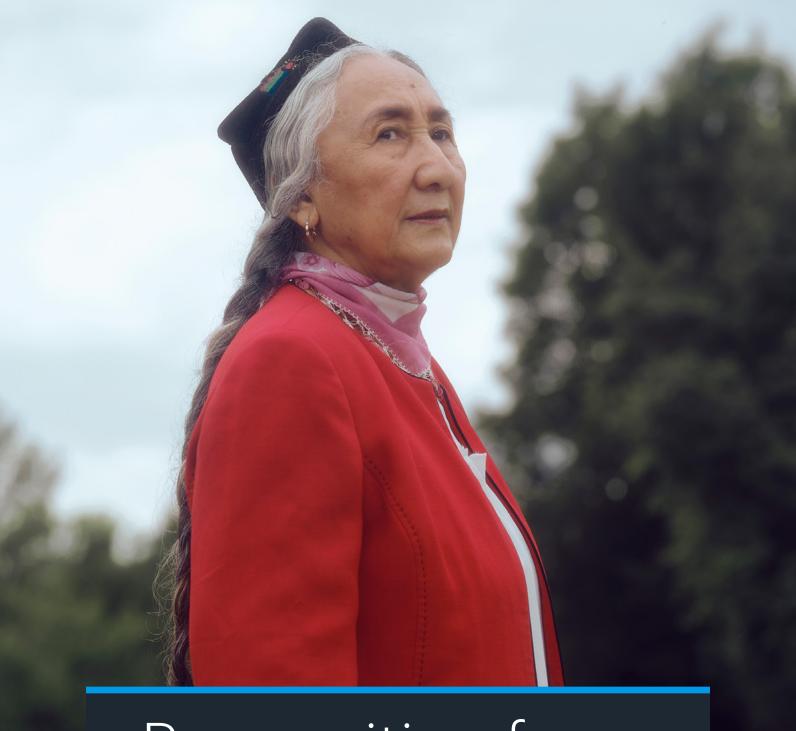
Watchdog Seeks Harsher Penalties for Abuses at Mental Health Center

An investigation published in September by ProPublica, Lee Enterprises and Capitol News Illinois exposed a history of egregious patient abuses and other employee misconduct at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center located in rural Anna, Illinois. In one of the most horrific examples of abuse, a patient with developmental disabilities was brutally beaten by caretakers in 2014. At least 26 employees over the past decade have been arrested on felony charges in relation to their work at the facility, and internal investigations have cited dozens of other employees for neglecting, exploiting or humiliating residents, lying to investigators or failing to report allegations of mistreatment in a timely manner. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker condemned patient abuses, and the Illinois Department of Human Services inspector general is seeking harsher penalties against health care workers who obstruct abuse and neglect investigations.

Investigators Expand Probe of COVID-19 Testing Company With 96% Error Rate

In May, our reporting with the Nevada Independent and Block Club Chicago revealed that tests produced

by Northshore Clinical Labs, a COVID-19 testing laboratory hired by state and local officials across Nevada, didn't work. As evidence mounted that Northshore was telling infected people that they had tested negative for the virus, government managers in Nevada ignored their own scientists' warnings and expanded the lab's testing beyond its initial schools to the general public. Run by three men with no apparent clinical laboratory experience and a history of fraud allegations, Northshore used political connections to fast-track its state laboratory license application and secure testing agreements. Northshore declined to comment on their record. Within days of our investigation, federal authorities expanded an ongoing investigation into Northshore to include its operations in Nevada. Citing our reporting, the Inspector General's Office of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicated it planned to subpoena documents from Nevada health officials. Our investigation also became a major talking point in Nevada's gubernatorial race. Northshore submitted 600 pages of documentation to state regulators to support its claim that it fixed deficiencies noted by inspectors, but it ultimately asked the state to close its license and pulled out of Nevada before the investigation was finished. The company repeatedly declined to comment to ProPublica.



Recognition for Our Work

This year ProPublica and our partners received many of journalism's highest honors, including the RFK Journalism Awards' Grand Prize; an Emmy Award; two George Polk Awards; and two Pulitzer Prize finalist designations. A <u>full list of awards</u> that ProPublica won is on our website. Here are some of the year's highlights.



At rallies around the country, correspondent A.C. Thompson found a growing movement intent on overturning the 2020 vote and altering the course of future elections. (FRONTLINE)

Pulitzer Prize Finalist — Feature Writing

"Juvenile Injustice, Tennessee" (with Nashville Public Radio's WPLN News)

Pulitzer Prize Finalist — Local Reporting

"Black Snow" (with The Palm Beach Post)

News & Documentary Emmy Award — Outstanding Science, Technology or Environmental Coverage "Unlivable Oasis" (with Time, Truly CA and Univision Noticias)

RFK Book and Journalism Awards — Grand Prize and Domestic Print

"Birth Rights" (with the Miami Herald)

George Polk Award — National Television Reporting

"American Insurrection" (with PBS FRONTLINE and the University of California, Berkeley's Investigative Reporting Program)

George Polk Award — State Reporting

"Birth Rights" (with the Miami Herald)

Scripps Howard Award — Excellence in Business/Financial Reporting

"The Secret IRS Files"

Scripps Howard Award — Excellence in Environmental Reporting

"Sacrifice Zones" (with The Texas Tribune and Mountain State Spotlight)

Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting

"The Secret IRS Files"



Yamile "Jamie" Acebo holds a photo of her first child, Jasmine, who was born with profound disabilities. (Emily Michot/Miami Herald)

MOLLY National Journalism Prize

"Juvenile Injustice, Tennessee" (with Nashville Public Radio's WPLN News)

Edward R. Murrow Award — Excellence in Innovation

"Sacrifice Zones" (with The Texas Tribune and Mountain State Spotlight)

Edward R. Murrow Award — Feature Documentary

"American Insurrection" (with PBS FRONTLINE and the University of California, Berkeley's Investigative Reporting Program)

Edward R. Murrow Award — Continuing Coverage

"Documenting Hate" series (with PBS FRONTLINE)

Gerald Loeb Award — International

"How China Spreads Its Propaganda Version of Life for Uyghurs" (with The New York Times)





Rebecca McDonald sits in the bedroom of her 16-year-old son, who is being held at the juvenile detention facility in St. Martinville, Louisiana. (Bryan Tarnowski for NBC News, The Marshall Project and ProPublica)

Partner Spotlight

- ProPublica reporter Ken Armstrong and Raquel Rutledge of the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** teamed up to illuminate two systems of justice one for wealthy property owners and another for impoverished renters in their story about a devastating house fire. To vividly show the intersecting lives of a struggling mother and a notorious landlord who rented homes with faulty wiring, the Pulitzer Prize winners dug into records from 18 local, state and federal agencies; wrote the story with compelling first-person scenes; and incorporated audio recordings from police interrogations and court hearings.
- ProPublica Local Reporting Network partner **Outlier Media** uses text messages to connect Detroit residents to news about their communities. This innovative outreach strategy helped Sarah Alvarez, Outlier Media founder and editor-in-chief, understand individuals' experiences with high electricity

- bills and disconnections. Working with ProPublica, she then performed a data analysis showing that Detroit's electric service provider shut off accounts for nonpayment during the pandemic at rates far higher than previously reported insights that prompted calls for a one-year moratorium on shut-offs.
- ProPublica's Annie Waldman was investigating a tip about a troubled juvenile lockup in Louisiana when a source told her that reporters from **The Marshall Project** and **NBC News** were reporting on it, too. Instead of competing to be the first to publish, the organizations entered into a rare three-way reporting and editing partnership, channeling their efforts into a groundbreaking exposé of the state's harsh treatment of teens in its custody, who were kept in solitary confinement around the clock. Three months later, Louisiana's governor signed a law placing strict limits on the use of solitary confinement for youth.

ProPublica Partners, 2022

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The Maine Monitor

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Medill Investigative Lab

Miami Herald

Military Times

The Washington Post

2 officers convicted in fatal chase Zelensky, Biden seek to rally support

One guilty of murder,

One guilty of murder, both of obstruction in 2020 pursuit of moped

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For two presidents, a show of strength and shared objectives

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are ing," Zelensky said Wedaduring a joint news cosh
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both men.
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and closest ally in Bluef seed of seed

Policies: Despite unity, presidents differed on some war needs. A7 DIY patriotism: Kremin calls on bakens, knitters to aid troops. A30

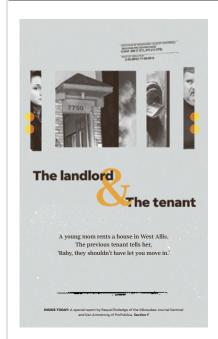


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Senate majority gives GOP power to impeach

State's voters expanded the Legislature's power

Molly Beck

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCON

MADISON - Wisconsin Republicane fiell short this month of creating a veto-proof majority in the state Legistature, but COP lawmakers have unlocked new powers by adding enough members in the state Senate to be able to expedite legislation and remove state officials for crimes or corruption. Votres in the Nov. a molterm electrons chose another four years of split state government with Republicans controlling the state Legislature and a controlling the state Legislature and a

See SENATE, Page 16

Do anti-abortion pregnancy centers help or mislead?

Devi Shastri and Meghan W Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

In the months since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, anti-abortion proponents in Wisconsin have painted the state's nearly 100 crisis pregnancy centers as integral to supporting women dealing with unexpected or unwanted pregnancies.

pected or unwanted pregnancies.
They contend the privately run centers, which often have religious affiliations, offer a viable option for medical services, economic and social support, and, if needed, adoption assistance.
For women who share the centers' religious views and want to see their

See CENTERS, Page 19

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting

Mountain State Spotlight

Nashville Public Radio

NBC News

The Nevada Independent

The New Bedford Light

New Mexico In Depth

The New Orleans Advocate | The Times-Picayune

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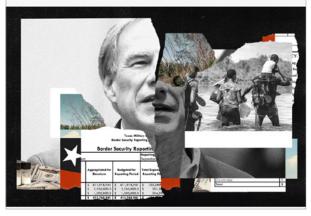
WTTW/Chicago PBS

WWL-TV (New Orleans)

New partners marked in **bold**.



lacked crucial context or were misleading. Here are a few examples.





Audience Snapshot

To effectively spur change in the world, ProPublica works to get its findings into the minds of both the broader public, especially communities affected by our investigations, and key decision-makers in a position to make reforms. We reach audiences directly, through our own platforms — including our website, mobile apps, newsletter and social media channels — and by partnering with other news organizations and aggregation platforms, such as Apple News, to help extend our reach and have more of a chance of reaching specific communities.

74

publishing partners

Including 22 first-time partners, such as The Baltimore Banner, The Kansas City Beacon and The Lever. An increase from 71 in 2021.

2,009

ProPublica articles republished by other publishers

This tally includes local, national and international print and digital publications that publish our work. Up 23% from 2021.

2.3 million

average monthly visitors to ProPublica.org

Our unique reach has returned to levels slightly ahead of 2019 levels, mirroring industry trends after an unprecedented news cycle in 2020-21. Down 35% from the 2021 average.

5.8 million

average monthly pageviews on ProPublica platforms

Total pages consumed mirror declines in reach, returning to levels seen in 2019. Down 37% from the 2021 average.

506,544

newsletter subscribers, total

We passed an important milestone, with more than half a million readers subscribing to at least one of our newsletters. Up 6% from 2021.

138,000

Instagram followers

Instagram has proved a growing and durable channel for reaching younger audiences. Up 15%.

912,300

Twitter followers

Twitter performance became more unpredictable this year as the platform made many changes. Down 3%.

Financial Information, 2022

Revenue for 2022 came in at approximately \$42 million. At the end of 2022, cumulative reserves were valued at \$40.1 million, calculated as total cash and investments at year end, less amounts needed for short-term operations. Reserves were reduced by approximately \$1.6 million to reflect our intention to return funds granted in 2022 from the Building a Stronger Future foundation.

Revenues

Board of Directors contributions and related grants	\$6,184,000
Major grants and gifts (\$50,000 and above)	\$25,173,000
Online donations	\$4,320,000
Other grants and gifts	\$5,295,000
Earned income and interest	\$ 1,170,000
Total	\$42,442,000

Expenses

News salaries, payments and benefits	\$28,069,000
Non-news salaries and benefits	\$4,779,000
Personnel support	\$2,642,000
Outreach	\$1,787,000
Professional fees	\$ 391,000
Occupancy/office	\$2,298,000
Capital costs	\$265,000
Taxes	\$19,000
Total	\$ 40,250,000

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

Cumulative reserves are calculated as total cash and investments valued at year end, less amounts needed for immediate short-term operations.

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