



 **PROPUBLICA**
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Celebrating 15 Years of Publishing

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.

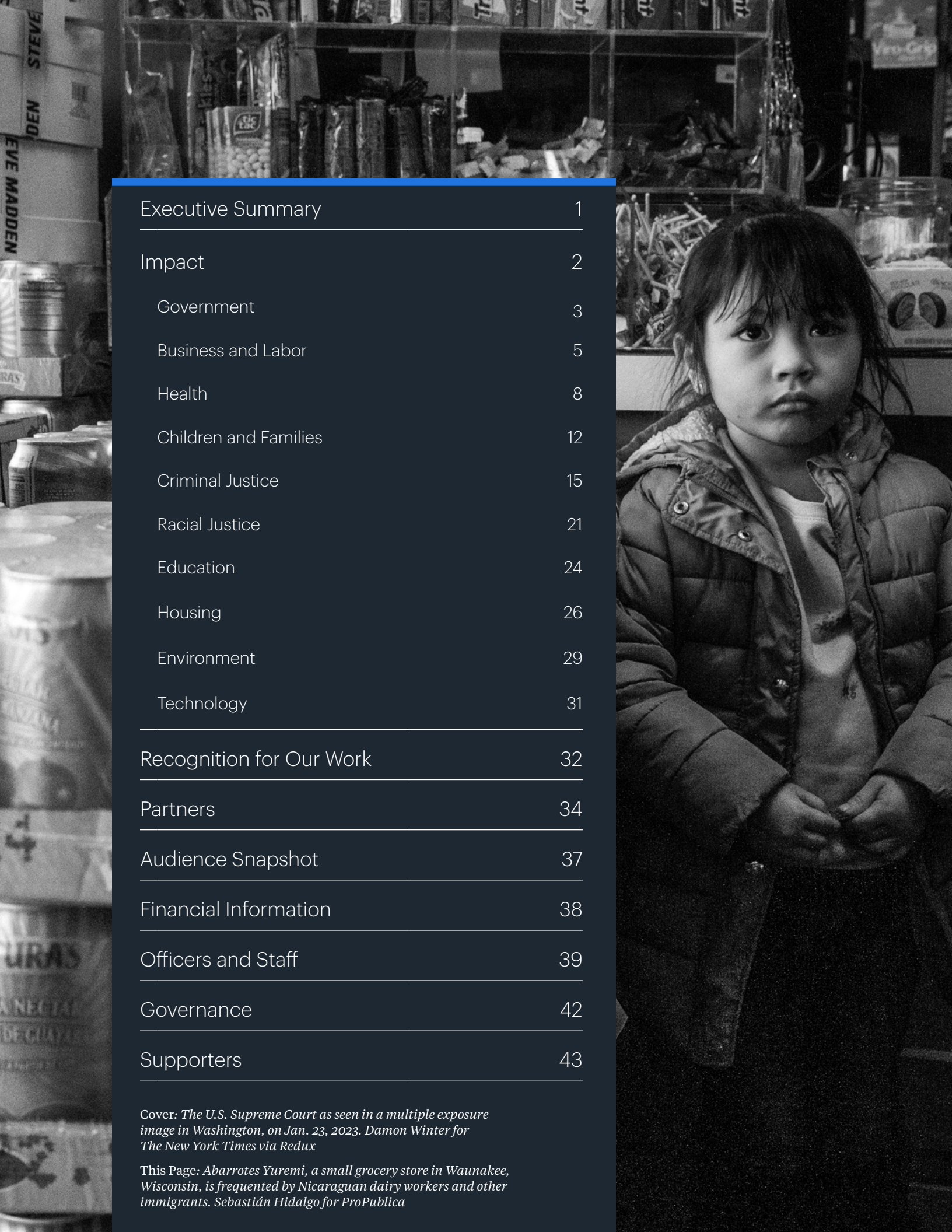
Today, with a team of nearly 150 editorial staffers — based in New York and working from state and regional offices in the Midwest, South, Southwest, Northwest, and Texas — ProPublica's staff is the largest in American journalism that's devoted solely to investigative reporting.

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 news initiatives include a growing team of journalists reporting from communities across the country, including a partnership with the Texas Tribune. Our Local Reporting Network gives local news organizations, 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.



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Cover: *The U.S. Supreme Court as seen in a multiple exposure image in Washington, on Jan. 23, 2023. Damon Winter for The New York Times via Redux*

This Page: *Abarrotes Yuremi, a small grocery store in Waunakee, Wisconsin, is frequented by Nicaraguan dairy workers and other immigrants. Sebastián Hidalgo for ProPublica*

Accountability — From the Statehouse to the Highest Court

ProPublica’s reporting last year shone an unprecedented spotlight on influence and ethics at the Supreme Court. A series of investigative stories revealed the [financial ties](#) between Justice Clarence Thomas and billionaire Republican megadonor Harlan Crow; documented Justice Samuel Alito’s [luxury travel](#) with billionaire and Republican donor Paul Singer; and chronicled conservative kingmaker Leonard Leo’s web of [money, influence and power](#). We also published a [first-of-its-kind database](#) that made it easy for the public to search and read for themselves the justices’ annual financial disclosures.

Our journalism prompted historic reforms. The court adopted a [code of conduct](#), a first in its 235-year history. Dozens of members of Congress have pressed for ethics reform, introducing multiple bills. The Senate held hearings on the subject, opened an investigation and [authorized subpoenas](#). Justice Thomas amended his past financial disclosures to report some — but not all — of what the reporters uncovered.

And our journalism is already producing significant real-world change in 2024. In January, Idaho Gov. Brad Little proposed a [\\$2 billion investment](#) in the state’s public schools infrastructure — the largest investment in school facilities in state history — [following our reporting](#) with Local Reporting Network partner Idaho Statesman. In his announcement, Little showed the photos of fallen ceiling tiles, cracked paint and damaged drains we published as a part of the investigation. That same month, Philips Respironics announced that it will [stop manufacturing](#) and selling all sleep apnea machines and ventilators in the United States, following [our investigation](#) with partner Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that exposed how the company held back thousands of complaints about its

popular breathing machines for more than a decade, despite evidence that the devices could release potentially toxic particles and fumes into the masks worn by patients.

There are several other milestones worth mentioning from our 15th year of reporting: We opened a [new reporting hub in the Northwest](#); we launched an [editor training program](#) to increase the ranks of investigative editors from diverse backgrounds; and we published our [first interview with a sitting president](#).

As the news industry experiences yet another wave of volatility, and America braces for another contentious election season, we appreciate, to an even greater degree, how much our work is only possible through your support.

Thank you.



Robin Sparkman

Robin Sparkman,
President



Stephen Engelberg

Stephen Engelberg,
Editor-in-Chief



Impact

The most important measure of our work is whether it has impact. We measure impact not in terms of audience size or honors, but in real-world changes to behaviors, policies or legislation. Our journalism in 2023 spurred change in a number of important areas.

Jeremiah Johnson, 8, climbs up a small ladder on the side of a parked freight train in Hammond, Indiana, on Nov. 16, 2022. Many mornings, children who walk to school need to find a way of climbing over or under a train to make it to their classes on time. Jamie Kelter Davis for ProPublica

Government



Our reporting on the financial ties between Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and billionaire Republican megadonor Harlan Crow ignited a national debate about the ethics of the court. Collage by Lisa Larson-Walker/ProPublica

Supreme Court Adopts First Conduct Code

Following [months of reporting](#) into Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas’ decadeslong relationship with Republican megadonor Harlan Crow and, separately, Justice Samuel Alito’s luxury travel with billionaire Republican donor Paul Singer, the Supreme Court announced in November it had unanimously adopted the first ethics code in its 235-year history.

Our reporting led to a host of other disclosures. In August, Clarence Thomas [for the first time acknowledged](#) that he should have reported selling real estate to billionaire Harlan Crow in 2014. Writing in his annual financial disclosure form, Thomas said that he “inadvertently failed to realize” that the deal needed to be publicly disclosed. Thomas also disclosed receiving three private jet trips in 2022 from Crow, two

of which we had reported on. In November, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to authorize subpoenas of Crow and conservative legal activist Leonard Leo as part of the committee’s ongoing effort to investigate ethics lapses by justices.

In response to our initial report, Thomas acknowledged the trips and defended his failure to disclose them, citing guidance from colleagues and others in the judiciary. Crow issued statements about his relationship with Thomas, which we’ve included in our stories. He acknowledged that he’d extended “hospitality” to Thomas and his wife, but he said Thomas never asked for any of it and it was “no different from the hospitality we have extended to our many other dear friends.” Leo did not respond to questions about organizing Alito’s 2008 trip but said in a statement that he “would never presume to tell” justices Alito and Scalia “what to do.”



Illustration by Matt Rota for ProPublica and ICIJ

Nations Crack Down on “Shadow Diplomat” System

Countries around the globe have launched investigations and proposed reforms to the unregulated honorary consul system after [an investigation](#) by ProPublica, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and more than 50 international media organizations. Our investigation revealed at least 500 current or former consuls accused of crimes or some kind of wrongdoing. In January 2023, Jordan, Latvia and Israel became the latest countries to either [terminate or review](#) their honorary consul appointments. And in February 2023, Mohammad Ibrahim Bazzi, a former Lebanese diplomat appointed by the Gambian government, was [indicted on money laundering and terrorism charges](#) for allegedly funding the terrorist group Hezbollah, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. He was in plea negotiations as of December 2023.

Anchorage City Commissioner Charged With Fraud

A city commissioner and her husband [have been charged](#) with fraudulently obtaining \$1.6 million in COVID-19 recovery money for their charity in Alaska. Charges filed in September accuse the couple of buying cryptocurrency with and making other personal use of money intended to help people find homes and addiction treatment. (They have both pleaded not guilty.) The developments followed reporting from ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner the Anchorage Daily News that revealed [the city’s governing body gave the couple one of the largest awards](#) under the American Rescue Plan Act despite prior fraud allegations.

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT



“When our reporting team started to look into the federal judiciary, we had hints that Supreme Court justices might be getting undisclosed gifts from politically influential billionaires. But even basic information about the justices’ extracurriculars are tightly guarded, and public records laws don’t apply to the court. One breakthrough came when we decided to focus on service workers: we interviewed yacht workers, private jet pilots, Bohemian Grove valets and even an Indonesian scuba instructor.”

—Justin Elliott,
reporter covering business and politics

Business and Labor



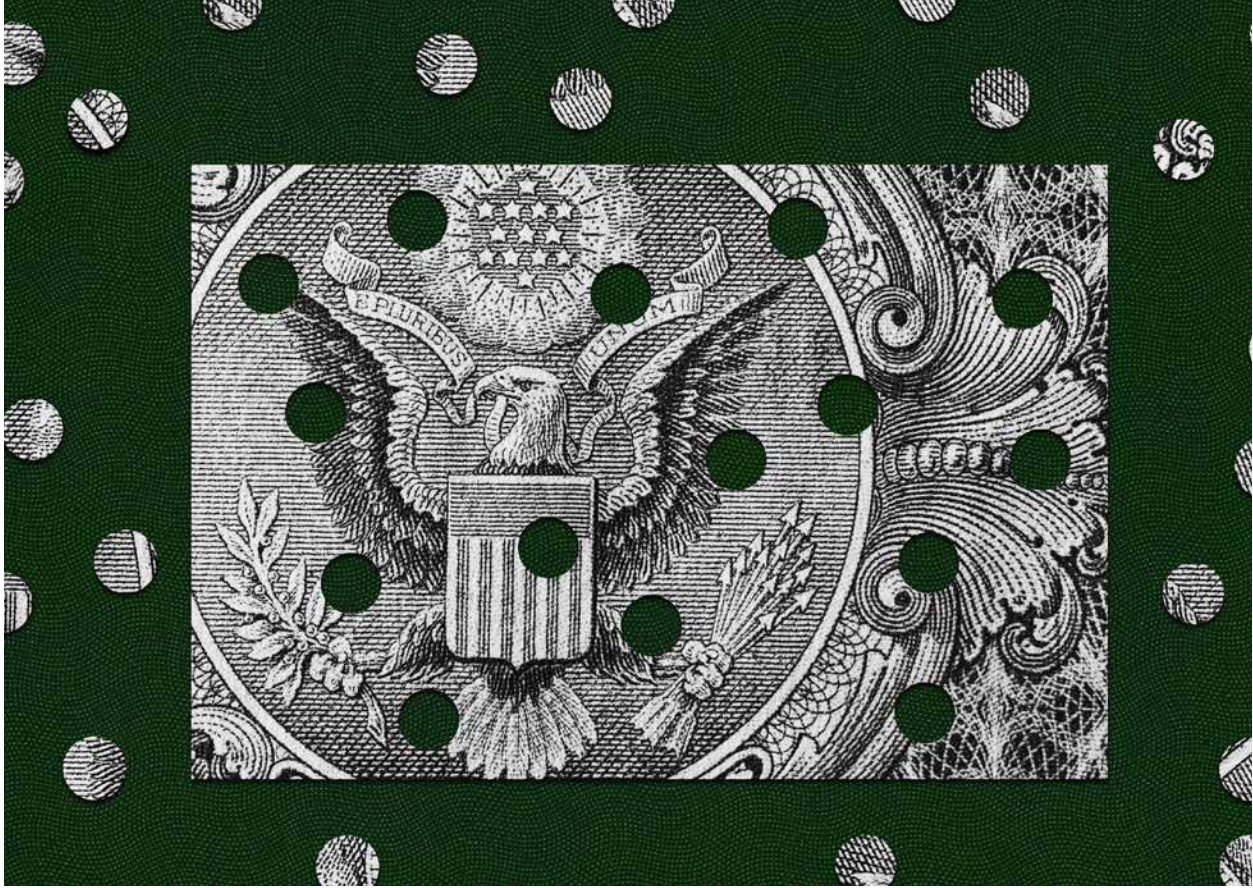
Our reporting on misleading digital advertising by Intuit, the makers of TurboTax, prompted a series of federal and state investigations into the company. Illustration by Richard Borge, special to ProPublica

IRS Pilots Free Tax Filing Tool

In 2019, we reported that Intuit’s TurboTax used deceptive design and misleading ads to lure tax filers into what was billed as free tax filing, only to charge them. In 2022, Intuit reached a \$141 million settlement with state attorneys general, and beginning in May 2023, more than 4 million people began receiving refunds of up to \$90 apiece. In January 2024, the Federal Trade Commission declared that Intuit’s “deceptive ad campaign” had been “broad, enduring and willful.” The agency issued a cease-and-desist order. (Intuit said it will appeal.) The IRS also announced that it would develop a free tool to allow Americans to file taxes directly with the agency.

Senators Question KPMG’s Work for Microsoft

Citing our reporting, three senators sent a letter to the CEO of KPMG in November about the firm’s work for Microsoft on a deal that shifted billions in U.S. profits to a tax haven. In October, Microsoft disclosed that the IRS had sent the company a bill for \$28.9 billion in back taxes as part of an audit. The centerpiece of the audit, as ProPublica had detailed in a 2020 investigation, is a 2005 transaction that moved tens of billions of Microsoft’s U.S. profits to a small factory in Puerto Rico to help the software giant save billions in taxes. In a brief in the IRS case, KPMG wrote that it had “provided routine tax advice to its long standing client, Microsoft, in response to Microsoft’s request for advice relating to a plan that Microsoft itself conceptualized — actions that do not, under any standard, qualify as the ‘promotion’ of a tax shelter.”



Collage by Alex Bandoni/ProPublica. Source Image: Paul Taylor/Getty Images.

Goldman Sachs and Steve Ballmer Pledge to Halt “Wash Sales”

In February 2023, ProPublica [reported on a tax maneuver](#) that has been saving wealthy investors billions of dollars by letting them skirt a century-old law. Congress outlawed “wash sales” in 1921, but Goldman Sachs and others have helped billionaires like former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer see huge tax savings by selling stocks for a loss and then replacing them within a short period of time with nearly identical investments. After being contacted by ProPublica, Goldman Sachs said it would halt transactions like those featured in our reporting involving two classes of stock from the same company. A Ballmer spokesperson said that he would “amend his filings and pay any associated tax, interest or penalty promptly.”

DTE Energy Faces Oversight on Debt Collection

DTE Energy, Michigan’s largest utility, will be [required to publicly disclose](#) information about how often it sells struggling customers’ old debt to third-party collectors following revelations that it does so far more often than other utilities in the region. [A 2022 investigation](#) by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner Outlier Media detailed how DTE sold customer debt from closed accounts for pennies on the dollar over a period of nine years. Companies that bought the debt have sued Detroiters, garnished paychecks and income tax returns and put liens on homes. Following our reporting, three members of Congress [introduced a resolution](#) calling for a ban on the sale of household debt, the creation of a federal database to track disconnections and a congressional hearing on utility issues, among other things.



Blocked Train Crossings Crisis Draws Calls for Action

Our investigations into [railway safety](#), highlighting the dangers of long trains and trains blocking railroad crossings in Hammond, Indiana, for hours or even days, have [spurred outcry by residents](#), safety advisories by the Federal Railroad Administration and demands for change by bipartisan lawmakers. The report revealed how major train companies routinely allow trains to block crossings, preventing vehicles from reaching emergencies and endangering children trying to get to school, among other disruptions. Reporters found that there were at least 28,000 reports of trains stopped on crossings last year alone. Since our reporting, Norfolk Southern has made [short-term improvements](#) and there were no reports of trains blocking schoolchildren in Hammond for the first three months of the school year, though long-term commitments, like building a pedestrian bridge, have yet to be confirmed.



Top left: *Elementary school children walk over freight train tracks on their way to school in Hammond, Indiana, on October 24, 2022. Jamie Kelter Davis for ProPublica*

Top right: *Two children help each other cross over a parked freight train blocking their route to school in Hammond, Indiana, on Nov. 16, 2022. Jamie Kelter Davis for ProPublica*

Bottom right: *Lamira Samson and her son Jeremiah Johnson stand in front of a parked freight train that often blocks the route to Jeremiah's elementary school in Hammond, Indiana, on Nov. 16, 2022. Jamie Kelter Davis for ProPublica*



David Campano holds his partial recall replacement Phillips Respironics DreamStations in his bedroom on Dec. 15, 2023, in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Philips Halts Sale of Breathing Machines in U.S., FDA Oversight Questioned

The Government Accountability Office is investigating the Food and Drug Administration's oversight of medical device recalls following [an investigation](#) by ProPublica and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. It revealed that for 11 years, Philips Respironics kept secret more than 3,700 complaints about its popular CPAP machines, despite evidence that the devices could spew hazardous particles and fumes into the masks of patients. The company did not launch a recall until 2021. The stories also showed that the FDA, responsible for protecting the public, received several hundred complaints about the machines in the years before the recall but did not issue any safety alerts. Sens. Blumenthal and Dick Durbin asked the GAO to [investigate](#), citing our series. Federal lawmakers also called for [investigations](#) of Philips by the Department

of Justice and the FDA. In January 2024, Philips Respironics announced that it will stop manufacturing and selling all sleep apnea machines and ventilators in the United States under a settlement with the federal government that will essentially end the company's reign as one of the top makers of respiratory devices in the country. It could be years before the company can resume sales.

New Bill Would Ban Insurers From Charging Doctors Hidden Fees

A bipartisan group of six U.S. representatives has [introduced a bill](#) that would prohibit insurers and their intermediaries from levying fees on doctors for paying them electronically. The legislation comes in the wake of a ProPublica [investigation](#) published in August that detailed the toll of such fees, which add up to billions of dollars that could be spent on care but are instead funneled to insurers and payment processors.

Senate Unanimously Passes Legislation to Prevent Stillbirths

In September, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed the [Maternal and Child Health Stillbirth Prevention Act](#), which ensures that federal maternal and child health dollars can be used for stillbirth prevention efforts. Members of Congress credited our reporting when discussing the bipartisan legislation aimed at reducing the more than 20,000 pregnancies that end in stillbirth every year. We reported that a lack of [comprehensive action, research and awareness](#), as well as [stark racial disparities](#), has contributed to the crisis in this country. Another bill that is pending in Congress, the [SHINE for Autumn Act](#), would authorize \$45 million in federal funding over the next five years for programs to improve data and research. In May, this project was named a [Pulitzer Prize finalist](#) in the explanatory reporting category.

Experts to Study Controversial Forensic Test on Stillbirths

Legal experts from two universities will [convene a study](#) on a dubious forensic test in response to ProPublica's reporting on what's known as [the "lung float" test](#), which some medical examiners use to help determine whether a child was stillborn or born alive and took a breath. Our reporting found that although several medical examiners said the test is unreliable, it had been used in at least 11 cases since 2013 in which women were charged criminally, and it has helped to put behind bars nine of those women, some of whom later had their charges dropped and were released.

Cigna Under Fire for Denying Claims Without Reading Patient Files

A congressional committee and government regulators are [scrutinizing health insurance giant Cigna](#) following an investigation by ProPublica and The Capitol Forum that revealed company doctors [reject hundreds of thousands of claims a month](#), often without ever opening a patient file. We reported how the system used by Cigna to process claims used an algorithm that allowed its doctors to reject claims in batches by automatically labeling them "not medically necessary." Over two months in 2022, Cigna doctors rejected payment on 300,000 claims, spending an average of 1.2 seconds on each case. Class-action lawsuits against the company have

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT



"When I began reporting on stillbirths, there was so much I didn't know. Talking to families was critical to helping me understand the lifelong love and grief many of them experience. I also interviewed numerous doctors who anchored my reporting from a medical perspective. I was shocked to learn that as many as 1 in 4 stillbirths are potentially preventable and that the U.S. lags so far behind other countries in reducing its stillbirth rate. This reporting has been the most heartbreaking yet meaningful of my career."

—Duaa Eldeib,
reporter with ProPublica's
Midwest newsroom



Former hospice patient Patricia Marble. Melissa Lyttle for ProPublica

been filed in [California](#) and [Connecticut](#), citing our reporting. Cigna disputed the reporting as “biased and incomplete” and said the savings achieved through the system are passed on to clients.

Hospices in Four States to Receive Extra Scrutiny

Three months after ProPublica and the New Yorker [published an expose of hospice fraud](#) in November 2022, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [announced significant reforms](#) to how it inspects hospice providers, effective immediately. Our reporting revealed how hospice care has been transformed into a \$22 billion industry plagued by exploitation and alarming business practices, sparking immediate demands for reform from [Congress](#) and [government watchdog agencies](#). In July, federal regulators [rolled out enhanced oversight](#) of new hospices in Arizona, California, Nevada and Texas, targeting providers highlighted by our investigation.

Illinois Law Imposes Stiffer Penalties for Covering Up Patient Abuse

Spurred by our reporting, the Illinois governor [signed a bill into law](#) in June strengthening penalties for health care employees who conspire to hide abuse or interfere with investigations. In September 2022, an investigation by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partners Lee Enterprises and Capitol News Illinois exposed [a history of egregious patient abuses and other misconduct](#) at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center, a state-run facility for people with mental and developmental disabilities. We found that over a 10-year period ending in 2021, the inspector general’s office investigated more than 1,500 reports of patient abuse or neglect, and at least 26 employees have been arrested on felony charges connected to the facility. In the wake of our reporting, state officials have sprung into action, [seeking harsher penalties](#) against workers who obstruct investigations, [calling for legislative hearings](#), [relocating patients](#) and [removing Choate’s director](#) from his position.

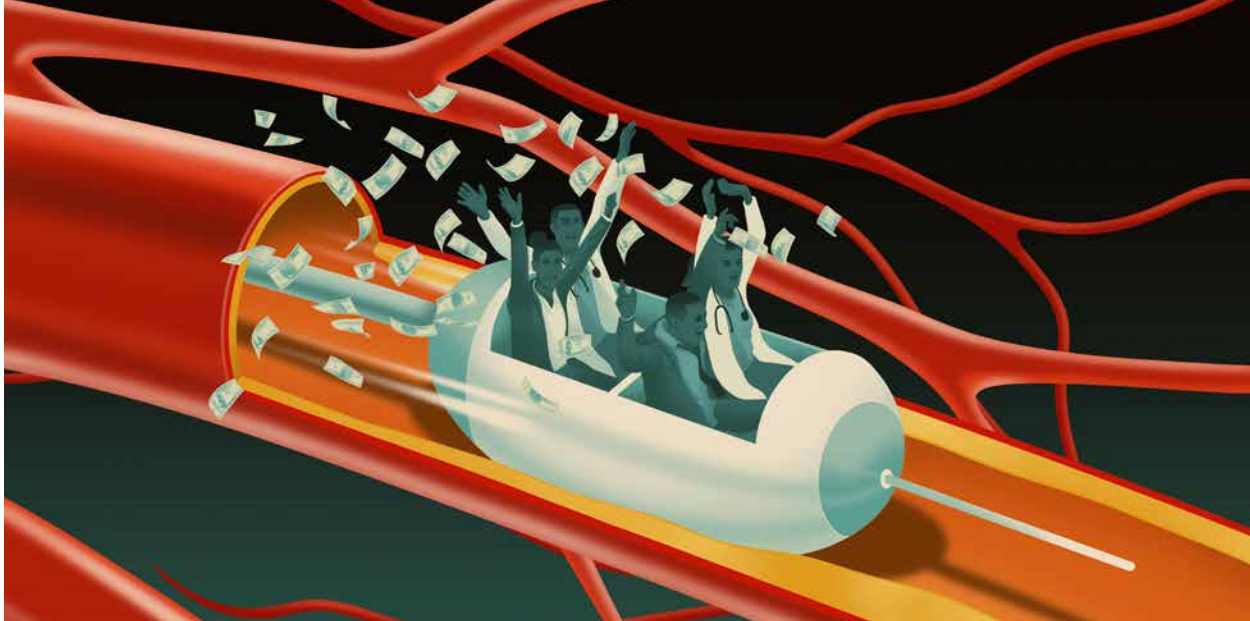


Illustration by Nash Weerasekera, special to ProPublica

Kansas Senators Ask VA About Overuse of Medical Devices

Hours after ProPublica, in collaboration with The Wichita Eagle, [revealed serious allegations](#) of illegal kickbacks and alleged patient harm at a veterans hospital in Kansas, the state's U.S. senators and a U.S. representative [demanded answers and accountability](#) from the Department of Veterans Affairs. According to a whistleblower lawsuit, representatives from Medtronic treated health care workers to steakhouse dinners, Apple electronics and NASCAR tickets, and secured a lucrative contract in return. Representatives also allegedly "groomed and trained" doctors, who then deployed the company's devices in artery procedures, even in cases when it was not medically necessary. Medtronic declined to respond to ProPublica's questions, citing the ongoing litigation. "These allegations are false and Medtronic is defending against these claims in court," said Boua Xiong, a spokesperson for the company.

Organ Donors to Be Tested for Chagas Disease

The organization that governs U.S. organ transplant policies [voted unanimously](#) to require donors be tested for a parasitic ailment called Chagas disease after

we reported on [the death of Bob Naedele](#), a former police detective who died in 2018 after receiving an infected heart. The policy change comes after years of recommendations from experts to require screening to prevent such deaths. Though cases of Chagas disease in the United States are rare, the parasite has been a known risk for transplant recipients for decades.

Head of Minnesota Nursing Board Steps Down

One month after our April [investigation of the Minnesota Nursing Board](#), Executive Director Kimberly Miller stepped down. Miller had been [placed on leave](#) amid accusations of mismanagement following our reporting, co-published with Minnesota Public Radio and KARE-TV. A 2015 state audit found the board was slow to act on patient complaints, and nurses accused of serious misconduct had been allowed to keep treating patients. Our story revealed that although the board ramped up its discipline for a few years, unresolved cases began to back up again, and the board's slow disciplinary process put the public in harm's way. In a previous interview with ProPublica, Miller acknowledged the backlog and said the board was working to "right the boat," though she did not respond to questions about complaints surrounding her job performance.

Children and Families



The Texas Capitol in Austin. Evan L’Roy/The Texas Tribune

Texas Lawmakers Take Action After Uvalde School Shooting

Following the Uvalde school shooting in May 2022, the ProPublica/Texas Tribune investigative unit immediately sprang into action, uncovering deep flaws in the response and revealing a loophole in state law that allowed people with severe mental health issues to purchase firearms. Those investigations led to changes when lawmakers returned in 2023 for the first legislative session since the shooting.

■ In February 2023, a Texas state senator introduced a slate of bills [aimed at better preparing schools and law enforcement](#) for mass casualty events, including a measure seeking to improve the emergency medical response. The legislation came two months after an investigation by ProPublica, The Texas Tribune and The Washington Post detailed [communication lapses among medical crews](#) that further hampered treatment for victims of the school shooting.

■ In May, the Texas Legislature [passed a bipartisan bill](#) to close a loophole in state law that required the reporting of court-ordered mental health hospitalizations of adults but not juveniles to a federal gun background check system. After we revealed the gap in the law, the Texas Judicial Council called on lawmakers to find a fix. Gov. Greg Abbott signed the bill into law in June.

■ And in December, a state district judge in Travis County ordered the Texas Department of Public Safety to [release law enforcement records](#) related to the shooting. DPS is appealing the ruling, which came more than a year after a consortium of news organizations, including ProPublica and The Texas Tribune, [sued for access](#). The lawsuit sought the release of records, including emails, video footage, call logs and emergency communications, that would bring more clarity to [law enforcement’s delayed response](#).



Biden Administration to Overhaul Welfare

The Biden administration is pursuing [proposed reforms](#) to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to ensure that more federal and state welfare dollars make it to low-income families, rather than being spent on other things or not spent at all. The reforms would end [multiple abuses](#) of the nation's cash assistance program for the poor that a 2021 ProPublica investigation found [states have been engaging in for years](#).

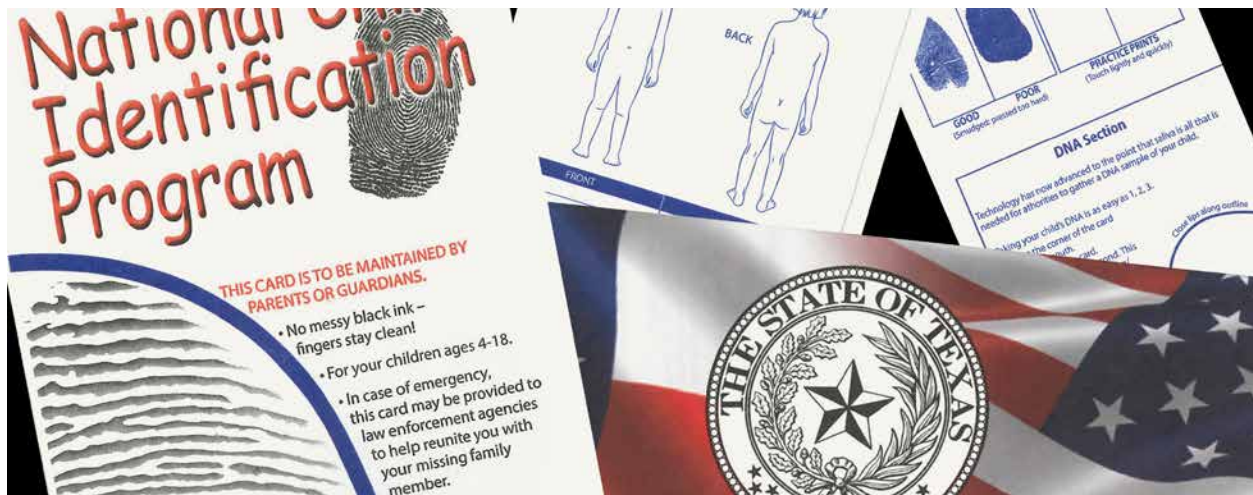
Colorado Reforms Custody Evaluation System

The state of Colorado passed legislation in May that [prohibits family courts from ordering children](#) to participate in reunification programs that isolate them from trusted caregivers. Our reporting brought to light how [some court-ordered reunification camps used physical restraint](#), threats and the removal of personal items to force children to comply with treatment. The new law also requires experts who advise the court on custody cases to be trained in working with victims of domestic violence and child abuse. The Colorado courts [suspended a well-known custody evaluator](#) and launched a review of the entire state-approved roster in the weeks following our investigation that found [evaluators had continued to work after being disciplined by state regulators](#), including for domestic violence.



Top: *Elina Asensio 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

Bottom right: *Elina's countdown app on her iPhone tracks the days, hours and minutes until she turns 18.* Trent Davis Bailey for ProPublica



Collage of a brochure for the National Child Identification Program's fingerprinting kits. Obtained by ProPublica and The Texas Tribune

Utah Calls for Examination of Reunification Therapies

In February, we reported on two siblings in Utah who [barricaded themselves in a bedroom](#) in defiance of a judge's order to return them to the custody of their father. Despite state child welfare investigators determining that the father had sexually abused the children, the judge sided with the father in the custody case, persuaded by allegations against the mother of "parental alienation," a disputed psychological theory that has been rejected by mainstream science. Weeks after our reporting, the judge [paused his order](#) to return the siblings to their father while a new criminal probe looking into allegations of felony child abuse is resolved. The father, via his attorney, has denied the child abuse allegations. Utah lawmakers are also calling for a reexamination of court-sanctioned reunification therapies for "alienated" minors.

Texas Pulls Funding for Ineffective Child ID Kits

Texas lawmakers will no longer spend millions of taxpayer dollars on [child identification kits](#) after a ProPublica-Texas Tribune investigation revealed there is no evidence the kits have helped locate missing children. Our reporting found that the Waco-based company that distributes the kits [used exaggerated statistics](#) and that Kenny Hansmire, a former NFL player who leads the company, was involved with a string of failed businesses plagued by legal and finan-

cial problems. Pennsylvania lawmakers separately [halted an effort](#) that would have allocated \$350,000 to purchase the company's kits after our investigation was published. Hansmire told ProPublica and the Tribune in an emailed statement that any legal disputes involving his businesses "have been properly resolved, closed, and are completely unrelated to the National Child ID Program." He claimed to have "paid debts entirely" and said, "We live in a society of second chances. My story is no different."

Lawsuit Filed Over New York City Child Welfare Searches

In November, a Brooklyn mother [filed a federal lawsuit](#) against the Administration for Children's Services, New York City's child welfare agency, and the city of New York, arguing that her Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches and seizures had been repeatedly violated by the agency's warrantless incursions into her family's home. Her lawsuit [cites our investigation](#) published last year with NBC News that found that ACS caseworkers search more than 50,000 typically low-income Black and Hispanic households every year, obtaining a warrant less than one-half of 1% of the time. Our reporting found that the mother, who is Black, has never been found to have committed any type of child maltreatment, according to ACS and court records, yet the agency has inspected her home or physically examined and questioned her young son at school more than two dozen times over the past three years, all without a warrant.

Criminal Justice



Illustration by Lisa Larson-Walker/ProPublica

Michigan Enacts Laws to Reform Its Juvenile Justice System

More than three years after ProPublica first reported the [story of Grace](#), a Michigan teen sent to juvenile detention for not doing her online schoolwork during the pandemic, Michigan's lieutenant governor [signed bipartisan legislation](#) intended to transform how the state handles young offenders. The package of 19 bills aims to keep young people out of the court system and detention when they get in trouble and instead provides more funding for community-based help, such as family counseling and mental health treatment. The reforms also include eliminating most fines and fees for juvenile defendants and their families and providing state funding for attorneys for those who cannot afford legal help. Our investigation had prompted widespread outrage and the formation of

a task force by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer that [revealed systemic flaws](#) in Michigan's juvenile justice system.

Columbia University Establishes \$100 Million Fund for Patients of Predator OB-GYN

After ProPublica and New York Magazine revealed how Columbia University [ignored warnings](#) about Robert Hadden, a former obstetrician-gynecologist who had sexually abused patients for decades while working at the school, Columbia [announced in November](#) a sweeping series of changes following [outrage and protests](#). The university said it will create a \$100 million survivors' settlement fund and would commit to an external investigation to examine the systemic failures that allowed Hadden's abuse to continue. Columbia also pledged to notify nearly 6,500 former Hadden patients about his crimes.



Prosecutors and Judges Push for Ban of 911 Call Analysis

Following our investigation into the way that 911 call analysis, a new form of junk science, has [infiltrated the justice system](#), prosecutors, judges and defense attorneys nationwide are [calling to ban](#) the use of the technique, review past convictions in which it was used and sanction prosecutors who snuck it into court despite knowing it was inadmissible. Shortly after our story was published, the Supreme Court of Illinois agreed to take another look at [the case of Jessica Logan](#). Logan was convicted of killing her child after a detective testified about his analysis of her 911 call to report her son was not breathing.



Top: from left, Riley Spitler, Kathy Carpenter and Russ Faria. All were charged with or convicted of murder after their calls for help was used as evidence against them. And all three were either released or acquitted of those charges. Greg Kahn, special to ProPublica

Bottom right: Greg Kahn, special to ProPublica



Eli Imadali for ProPublica

Trump Organization Found to Have Fraudulently Hyped Property Values

In September, New York State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron ruled that [Donald Trump committed fraud](#) by inflating the value of his assets — by between \$812 million and \$2.2 billion over seven years — and canceled operating certificates for Trump entities controlling some of the former president’s New York properties. Engoron’s decision cited inconsistencies between what Trump’s company reported to property tax authorities about the financial health of its skyscraper at 40 Wall Street and what the company told lenders. In 2019, ProPublica and WNYC [uncovered “stark differences”](#) in how the company portrayed the finances of 40 Wall Street. In February 2024, a New York judge ordered Trump to pay \$355 million in penalties, plus interest, and barred Trump from serving as an officer or director of a New York company for three years. Trump appealed the earlier ruling and will also appeal the penalties.

NYPD to Stop Withholding Body-Camera Footage of Police Shootings

The New York Police Department has agreed to end its practice of [withholding body-camera footage](#) of

police shootings from civilian investigators, weeks after ProPublica and The New York Times Magazine asked the NYPD about the practice as part of our [investigation into the use of police-worn body cameras](#). Our reporting found that the NYPD often refused to share footage of shootings and other serious incidents with the oversight board that investigates police misconduct in New York City, undermining the promise of transparency and accountability that accompanied the body-camera movement.

Colorado Lawmakers Mandate Audit of Halfway Houses

Following a [yearlong ProPublica investigation](#) into Colorado halfway houses, the state passed a [new law](#) requiring a third-party auditor to conduct evaluations every five years into the finances of halfway houses, including the costs imposed on residents of the facilities. Our reporting found that the state’s recidivism rate is one of the worst in the country — with nearly 50% of the people who leave a Colorado prison back behind bars within two years, many sent there directly from halfway houses. And unlike most aspects of the state’s criminal justice system, Colorado’s halfway house system lacks standardization, transparency, legislative oversight and enforcement.



Some of the 94 women, top, who sued Utah OB-GYN Dr. David Broadbent for sexual assault. Leah Hogsten/The Salt Lake Tribune

Louisiana State Rep. Calls for Reform of Court System

Following an investigation by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner WVUE-TV into [potential conflicts of interest in Louisiana mayor's courts](#), three mayors [will no longer serve as town judges](#), and a Louisiana state lawmaker is calling for reform of a court system that exists only in Louisiana and Ohio. In November, we reported on this unusual justice system in which the mayor can serve as judge even though he is responsible for town finances. The Louisiana Judicial College, the educational arm of the state Supreme Court, recommends that mayors appoint someone else to serve as judge if their town takes in at least 10% of its overall revenue from court. But we identified 13 towns in Louisiana with mayors on the bench even though their courts brought in up to 82% of their total governmental revenue in the fiscal year ending in 2022.

Utah Addresses Troubled Handling of Sexual Assault, Therapist Arrested

Throughout the year, ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner The Salt Lake Tribune have been

reporting on [Utah's troubling handling of sexual assault](#).

■ In March, the Utah Legislature passed a bill to [reform medical malpractice law](#), following an investigation that detailed how survivors who alleged they had been sexually abused by a health care worker were [treated more harshly](#) in Utah's civil courts than those who alleged that assault took place in other settings.

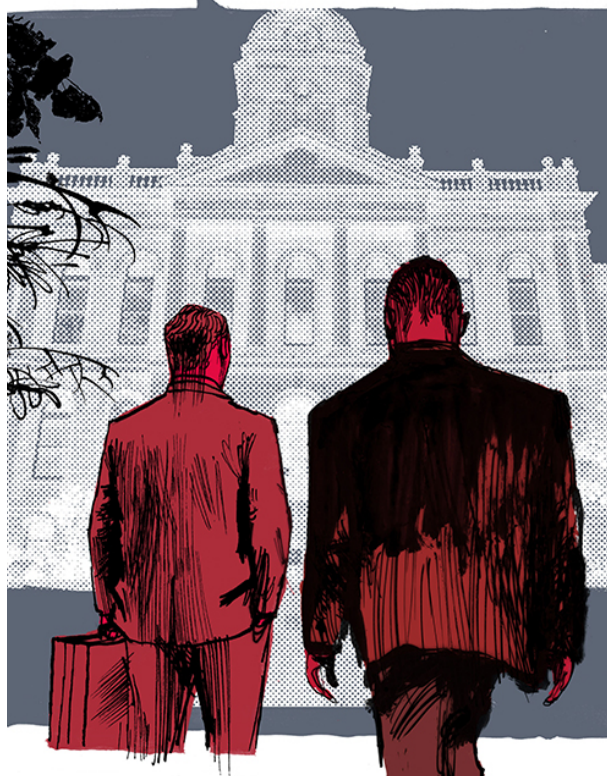
■ Following our August investigation into [alleged sexual abuse](#) by Utah therapist Scott Owen, he was [arrested in November](#) and charged with multiple felonies related to the allegations of three former patients who say he touched them inappropriately during therapy. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison. He has not yet entered a plea to the charges. We had reported that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recommended and paid for some of the men's therapy sessions with Owen, who had built a reputation for counseling men in the LDS church with same-gender attraction. Our investigation found that Owen was allowed to continue practicing for years after allegations of sexual abuse. The church said in response that it takes all matters of sexual misconduct seriously and that in 2019 it confidentially annotated internal records to alert bishops that Owen's conduct has threatened the well-being of other people or the church.

Trove of DNA Evidence Leads to a Serial Rape Arrest

An alleged serial rapist was [arrested in August](#) with help from evidence saved by a Baltimore County doctor nearly half a century earlier. In 2021, ProPublica published the [extraordinary story](#) of a doctor who began quietly preserving DNA evidence from rape victims starting in the 1970s, years before police began to collect forensic DNA. Decades later, Baltimore police began using the samples, one at a time, to connect cases, reshape conventional wisdom about rapists and solve more than 80 cold cases. This included securing a confession to a 1983 murder after ProPublica's reporter shared her findings with the police. But even then, only a sliver of the doctor's samples [had been tested](#) and the rest were still sitting in the hospital. After ProPublica's story, a Maryland law went into effect in October classifying the slides as official rape evidence and requiring the police department to count them and retain them in its rape kit backlog.

Two Police Officers Sentenced to Prison after Indiana Investigation

Our [2018 investigation](#) into the criminal justice system in Elkhart, Indiana, published with Local Reporting Network partner the South Bend Tribune, exposed [wrongful convictions](#), [questionable convictions](#), [dubious investigative practices](#) and a [lack of police accountability](#) and continues to see impact. Our reporting [exposed the 2018 beating](#) by two Elkhart police officers of a man handcuffed to a chair. One of the two officers [pleaded guilty](#) to a federal civil rights charge in September and was sentenced to 15 months in prison. The second officer was sentenced to a year in prison in October.



Top: Photo illustration by ProPublica. Photo of Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown by Robb Hill for *The Washington Post* via Getty Images. Background illustration by Isabel Seliger, special to ProPublica.

Bottom: Illustration by Matt Rota, special to ProPublica



Chicago police headquarters at 35th Street and Michigan Avenue in 2020. Jose M. Osorio/Chicago Tribune/Tribune News Service via Getty Images

Chicago Prosecutors Drop Cases Relying on Questionable Officer Testimony

Prosecutors in Illinois have [dropped at least 15 court cases](#) that hinged on the word of a former Chicago police officer who's now charged with perjury and forgery. Jeffrey Kriv is accused of lying under oath 44 times to get out of speeding, parking and red light camera tickets involving his personal vehicles; he blamed a purported girlfriend for taking his car and getting the tickets. ProPublica and the Chicago Tribune previously detailed Kriv's [long history of alleged misconduct](#) as an officer and his subsequent legal trouble, shedding light on Chicago's troubled history of police accountability. A lawyer for Kriv, informed of the reporting by ProPublica and the Tribune, said

“many of the facts you compose are incomplete or not true,” though he did not say what was inaccurate.

Tennessee Lawmakers Demand Audit of Juvenile Detention Facilities

A group of Tennessee lawmakers is [calling for an audit](#) of the use of seclusion inside all of Tennessee's juvenile detention facilities and the removal of a Knox County superintendent [following reporting](#) from ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner Nashville Public Radio. Our November investigation into the Richard L. Bean Juvenile Service Center in Knoxville found kids there have been locked alone in cells more often than other facilities in the state, sometimes for an indeterminate length of time, in violation of state laws and rules.

Racial Justice

Remains of Thousands of Native Americans Are Returned to Tribes

In January 2023, we began publishing [The Repatriation Project](#), an investigative series into the failures of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which revealed that [remains of more than 110,000 Native Americans](#) are still being held by prominent institutions across the U.S. The series included a dozen stories and [an interactive database](#) that allows the public to see the status of repatriation in their communities and has led to [widespread impact and acknowledgment of past failures](#). More than 70 news outlets cited ProPublica’s database to report on the repatriation progress of institutions in their communities. In part because of our work, American museums and universities repatriated more ancestral remains to tribal nations in 2023 than in any year in the three decades since NAGPRA’s passage, transferring ownership of the remains of an estimated 18,800 Native American ancestors. And more repatriations are forthcoming, as institutions filed 380 notices — more than the previous two years combined — declaring that they plan to make human remains and burial items available to tribes.

■ In addition, our reporting influenced [new federal rules](#) aimed at speeding repatriations of Native remains and burial items that went into effect in 2024. This came after a U.S. Senate committee [sent letters](#) to the five institutions identified as having the largest collections of Indigenous remains, [demanding an explanation](#) for why they’ve failed to return them to tribes as required by federal law. Weeks after the rules took effect, the American Museum of Natural History and Chicago’s Field Museum [closed longtime Native American exhibits](#) while they consulted with tribes, while the Metropolitan Museum of Art removed about 20 objects from its musical instruments gallery.

■ In November, the University of California, Berkeley, took a significant step toward repatriating 4,440 ancestral remains and nearly 25,000 items that were excavated from burial sites across the San Francisco Bay Area, following extensive consultations between the university and tribes.



Photo illustration by Alex Bandoni/ProPublica. Source images: Andy Lyons, Raymond Boyd/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images, Steven Pavlov/Wikipedia Commons and Bryan Pollard/Alamy Stock Photo.

■ In August, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed into law [sweeping reforms](#) that will for the first time give tribal nations final say over how and when the remains of their ancestors and sacred items are returned to them.

■ In May, the Metropolitan Museum of Art announced it [planned to hire four experts](#) to investigate “more thoroughly” the history of Native American work donated or loaned to the museum by the noted art collectors Charles and Valerie Diker. In a written statement to ProPublica, the collectors said, “For nearly 50 years, inspiring appreciation for the arts of Native America has been our greatest passion.” The couple also said that they had assessed “all available information relating to provenance” before acquiring the works.



Joint Task Force to Study How Colleges Uprooted Black Communities in Virginia

In January 2024, the city of Newport News, Virginia, and Christopher Newport University announced [the creation of a joint task force](#) to reexamine public universities' uprooting of Black neighborhoods following [our reporting](#), with Local Reporting Network partner Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism. Officials are also calling for displaced families to receive redress, from scholarships to reparations. In addition, the president of Christopher Newport University responded to our series by acknowledging that the school's establishment and expansion have "come at a human cost" and by stepping up recruiting of Black and low-income students. In September, we began publishing a series, also co-published with The Chronicle of Higher Education and Essence, detailing how Christopher Newport and [other Virginia universities have dislodged Black families](#), sometimes through the use of eminent domain, to make room for dormitories, parking lots, laboratories and other facilities, thereby exacerbating the racial gap in home ownership and the loss of Black-owned land.



Top left: *Deborah Mapp, 75, at her home in the Broad Creek neighborhood of Norfolk, Virginia, Sept. 7, 2023. The Norfolk area where she grew up was leveled to make room for a college. Bill Tiernan/VCIJ at WHRO*

Top right: *Christopher Tyree/VCIJ at WHRO*

Bottom right: *Lambert's Point neighborhood along 41st Street in Norfolk near the campus of Old Dominion University. Bill Tiernan/VCIJ at WHRO*



Clementine Grows, 83, a resident of the Wallace community in Louisiana, at Willow Grove Cemetery, where many of her relatives are buried. Akasha Rabut, special to ProPublica

Anchorage Library Official Resigns After Inflammatory Comments

The [deputy director of the Anchorage Public Library resigned](#), less than three weeks after ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner the Anchorage Daily News published an article documenting [her history of offensive comments](#) and social media posts. We reported that in March 2022, Judy Eledge expressed her disgust to a co-worker about the use of Indigenous land acknowledgements and the sharing of pronouns. She also called transgender people “very troubled.” Eledge has played an active role in Alaska politics, with appointments to the state Board of Education, the Anchorage Health and Human Services Commission and the Alaska Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee. In a brief phone conversation, Eledge said she could not comment on accusations involving her statements because they are the subject of a lawsuit.

Federal Agency Rejects Plans for Project That Could Harm Black Heritage Sites

For the second time in six months, the Army Corps of Engineers [reprimanded a Louisiana developer](#) for its failure to offer an adequate assessment of the harm that its proposed \$400 million development would cause to neighboring Black communities and historic sites. Months earlier, ProPublica revealed a whistleblower had [raised alarms about the project](#) after the company changed the findings of a report she submitted that concluded that the development would disrupt important historic sites, including possibly unmarked graves of enslaved people.

REPORTER SPOTLIGHT



“We knew from the outset that museums’ failures to repatriate Native American remains and belongings had caused real pain and frustration in tribal communities. So we took a lot of care to build trust with sources and report the stories that we hoped would help effect change. In the end, we were able to interview more than 100 tribal representatives, advocates, museum staff and government officials. We also drew upon public hearing transcripts, government reports and data that detailed how tribes’ repatriation efforts had been undermined for decades. Change often comes slowly to tribal communities, but I’m thankful that our repatriation reporting helped make a difference.”

**—Mary Hudetz
reporter with ProPublica’s
Southwest newsroom**

Education



Illustrations by Pia Guerra for ProPublica. Source images courtesy of students at Canyon Springs High School and school employees from the Caldwell and Moscow school districts in Idaho.

Idaho Lawmakers Seek Solutions to Repair Aging Schools

In January 2024, Idaho Gov. Brad Little [proposed a \\$2 billion investment](#) in the state's public schools infrastructure, following reporting by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner Idaho Statesman that revealed [collapsing roofs](#), [deteriorating foundations](#) and [freezing classrooms](#) in rural schools. Our investigation showed how Idaho's restrictive school funding policies and the Legislature's reluctance to make significant investments in school facilities have adversely impacted students and teachers, resulting in the state spending less per student on schools than any other state. In February 2024, Idaho lawmakers [proposed two bills](#) that would make it easier for schools districts to repair and replace their aging buildings, including one that would add \$1.5 billion over 10 years.

New Mexico AG Investigates School District for Discipline of Native American Students

The Attorney General of New Mexico is opening an investigation into [disproportionately harsh punishment of Native American students](#) by Gallup-McKinley County Schools following an investigation by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network Partner New Mexico In Depth. We reported that the district, which includes large swaths of the Navajo Nation in northwestern New Mexico, enrolls a quarter of the state's Native students but was [responsible for at least three-quarters of Native expulsions](#) in the 2016-17 to 2019-20 school years, according to student discipline data.

Tacoma Police Department Supplemental Report
Jurisdiction Agency: Tacoma Police Department

Incident No. 19119

Juvenile said he believed it was his right leg and that [redacted] used one hand squeezed it hard. Juvenile demonstrated that he had to hop toward the door on grabbed his other leg and squeezing. He said he told [redacted] to stop because it crying when he told [redacted] to stop. I asked Juvenile on a scale from 1 to 5 how r and Juvenile said a 5 because it hurt.

Juvenile his mom saw the mark on his leg and asked him how he o
rem [redacted] and told [redacted] said nothing "the #"

In 2019, a 9-year-old boy with autism told police that his teacher at Northwest School of Innovative Learning in Tacoma, Washington, grabbed him by the thigh and dragged him across a classroom because he wouldn't run laps. Tacoma Police Department report obtained, annotated by The Seattle Times and ProPublica

Private Special Education School in Washington Closes Amid Scrutiny

Northwest School of Innovative Learning, until recently Washington's largest publicly funded private school for children with disabilities, [announced plans to close](#) in November amid a state investigation and a [ban on accepting new students](#). Education officials had [launched the investigation](#) following a [harrowing report](#) published last year by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner the Seattle Times exposing years of abuse complaints and substandard academics. Our investigation revealed how the state superintendent's office failed to take meaningful actions on years of serious complaints about the school's discipline and academics. In response to our reporting, lawmakers [passed a bill](#) in April strengthening oversight and regulatory power of these private special education schools that serve some of the state's most vulnerable public school students.

Michigan College Under Federal Investigation for Recruitment Practices

Following a ProPublica and Detroit Free Press [investigation](#) last year, the U.S. Department of Education has [opened an investigation into Baker College](#), a large nonprofit school in Michigan, over its "recruitment and marketing practices," according to a new public disclosure. Investigators arrived on campus this fall and have [questioned students](#) about admission interactions, including what they were told about

cost, financial aid and post-graduation salaries. Our reporting found that Baker College spent more on marketing than it did on financial aid and that less than one-quarter of its students graduate — far below the national average for private four-year schools, according to federal data. Baker's public relations manager commented that "we are and will remain fully cooperative with any requests made from the Department of Education."

Illinois Lawmakers Address School Discipline Policies

Following our [investigative series](#) with the Chicago Tribune that revealed Illinois police routinely issue tickets to children for minor misbehavior at school, the Illinois House [reintroduced legislation](#) that would make the practice illegal. Our investigation last year revealed that school-based ticketing was rampant across the state, bringing students into a judicial system meant for adults without legal protections. In August, a college student won her [3-plus-year-long legal battle](#) over a student ticket issued when she was in high school. After her case was featured as part of the series, two prominent civil rights attorneys volunteered to represent her. The U.S. Department of Education has also opened a [civil rights investigation](#) into an Illinois school district for students with disabilities after [we reported](#) that students at one school [were arrested](#) with stunning frequency — more than 100 times in the last five school years.

Housing



Illustration by Lisa Larson-Walker/ProPublica

DOJ Backs Tenants in Case Alleging Price-Fixing

The Department of Justice is [backing the plaintiffs](#) in a massive antitrust lawsuit filed by dozens of tenants who are accusing a tech company’s apartment software of helping landlords collude to inflate rents. Tenants across the country filed dozens of federal lawsuits alleging violations of antitrust law by scores of big landlords following a ProPublica investigation that found Texas-based software provider RealPage [used algorithms to recommend rents](#) to landlords across the country to maximize profits. Critics say the software — used to help set prices for approximately 8% of all rental units nationwide — may be helping big landlords operate as a cartel to push rents above competitive levels in some markets. RealPage said it “strongly denies the allegations and will vigorously defend against the lawsuit.”

Minnesota AG Investigates Contract-for-Deed Transactions

The Minnesota attorney general’s office is [investigating potentially exploitative real estate transactions](#) that have targeted Somali and Hispanic immigrant homebuyers in the state following [an investigation](#) by ProPublica and Sahan Journal in 2022. In July 2023, a U.S. Senate subcommittee met to [call for further oversight and consumer protections](#) in contract-for-deed real estate transactions. Our report had revealed how contracts-for-deed — an alternative home sale agreement made directly between a seller and a buyer — can lock purchasers into inflated prices and unfavorable terms and sometimes lead to eviction and the loss of their life savings.

Massachusetts Pushes to Fill Vacant State-Funded Apartments

In September, Massachusetts housing officials announced that they had launched a “90-day push” to reduce the number of vacancies in state public housing by the end of the year. The initiative comes after an investigation by ProPublica and WBUR found nearly 2,300 of 41,500 state-funded apartments were vacant at the end of July — most for months or years — despite a severe housing shortage. Our reporting found that the vacancies were caused by a flawed online system that the state created for selecting potential tenants, as well as underfunding for maintenance, renovations and staff.

Los Angeles Housing Department Cracks Down on Residential Hotels

The Los Angeles Housing Department has ordered the owners of 21 buildings meant to house some of the city’s poorest residents to stop renting rooms to tourists, following a review that was prompted by reporting by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner Capital & Main. Our investigation documented how some owners of the buildings, known as residential hotels, were advertising short-term rentals to tourists despite a 2008 law aimed at preserving the rooms for affordable housing. Following our investigation, the agency is also proposing to significantly increase its staffing and inspections of residential hotels.

House-Flipping Franchises Come Under Fire

HomeVestors of America, the self-described largest home buyer in the country, reformed some of its business practices in response to a ProPublica investigation last year that revealed some company franchises had deceived sellers and targeted vulnerable people. The company’s 1,100 “We Buy Ugly Houses” franchises will now be required to provide homeowners who sell to them with a disclosure granting a three-day window for terminating a sales contract — a safeguard praised by housing advocates. In June, after publication of our investigation, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau told a U.S. Senate Committee that the Department of Justice and state attorneys general should turn their attention to the predatory practices of HomeVestors. The company’s president and CEO stepped down, citing the toll from “recent

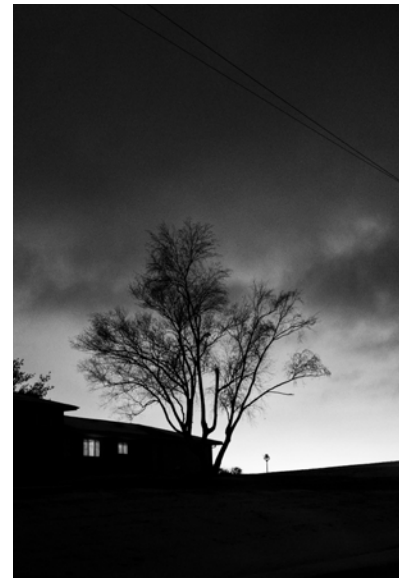


Jaime Colindres lived at the American Hotel in Los Angeles in the 1990s and again for about five years in the 2010s. Barbara Davidson for ProPublica

press coverage.” A HomeVestors’ spokesperson said ProPublica’s reporting represented a fraction of the company’s transactions and that such predatory behavior isn’t taught or tolerated and that “lying is against our code of ethics and our culture.”

Louisiana Drops Lawsuits Against Hurricane Survivors

Following a Local Reporting Network investigation co-published with The Advocate | The Times-Picayune and WWL-TV, the state of Louisiana announced in February it would drop thousands of lawsuits against homeowners who received federal Road Home grants after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The lawsuits were filed against people who received grants to elevate their homes but used the money to make repairs instead. However, our investigation found that many of those homeowners said they had been told by Road Home representatives that they could use the money for repairs. We also reported that the majority of the grants were in lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color. The investigation examined how relief programs following natural disasters inadvertently punish poor communities.



Wisconsin Officials Approve \$8 Million for Housing for Immigrant Dairy Workers

Following our investigation into [the tragic death](#) of an 8-year-old Nicaraguan boy on a Wisconsin dairy farm and the flawed investigation that followed, officials in Dane County, Wisconsin [approved reforms](#) including an \$8 million fund for farmworker housing and measures to improve access to government services for people who don't speak English. Our investigation sparked [calls for action](#) from state and local officials, and shone a light on the dangerous working conditions and lack of protections for dairy farm workers — many of whom are undocumented.



Sebastián Hidalgo for ProPublica

Environment



The OxyChem plant in Niagara Falls, New York. Rich-Joseph Facun, special to ProPublica

Federal Agencies Work to Combat Asbestos

In 2022, ProPublica and NPR investigated [hazardous working conditions](#) at a chlorine plant where workers were regularly exposed to asbestos.

■ In March, lawmakers [reintroduced a bill](#) to ban the use of asbestos in the United States. If passed, the U.S. would join dozens of countries that have outlawed the carcinogenic substance.

■ The EPA, meanwhile, is working on its own ban. The EPA invited the public to weigh in on new information the agency received about the proposed ban, including ProPublica's reports about workplace safety.

■ In a dramatic turnaround, Olin Corporation, one of the few U.S. manufacturers still using asbestos, has signaled [newfound support](#) for the EPA ban if given two years to phase out the application of any new asbestos materials, with an additional five years to phase out asbestos materials already in use.

■ In July 2023, OSHA announced plans to [reform the workplace safety program](#) that reduced inspections at some manufacturers.

Northwest Tribes Will Control Salmon Recovery Funds

In December, the Biden administration reached a [“historic” legal deal](#) with Northwest Indigenous tribes to save endangered salmon, including \$1 billion in new funding for Columbia River salmon restoration. The deal follows [yearslong reporting](#) by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network partner Oregon Public Broadcasting into the ways in which the U.S. government has violated its treaties with the tribes of the region by failing to protect their access to fish. The deal additionally grants states and tribes control over how that money gets spent, addressing one of the biggest sources of frustration for tribes that we highlighted in our investigation.

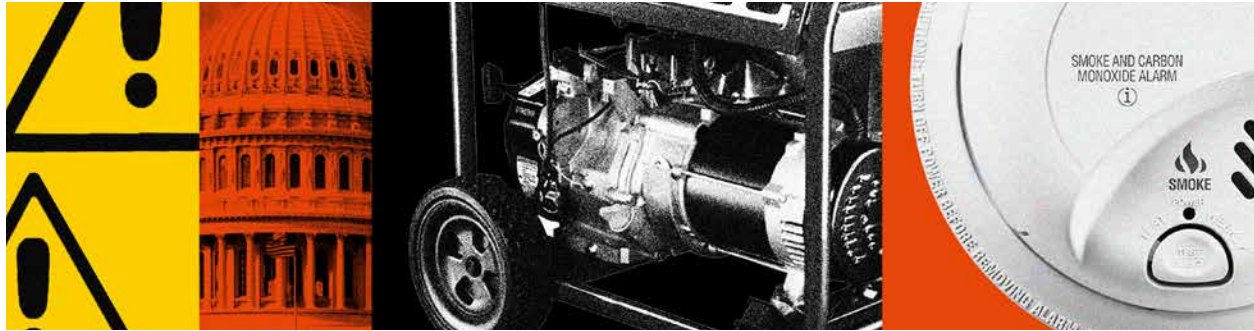


Photo illustration by NBC News

EPA Announces Major Air Pollution Reforms

Our groundbreaking [Sacrifice Zones](#) revealed that, largely in areas populated by people of color, residents are being exposed to toxic industrial emissions linked to an increased risk of cancer. In April, the EPA [proposed a series of extensive reforms](#) to slash air pollution at chemical plants and facilities that sterilize medical equipment. This followed our reporting, which estimated that 74 million Americans were exposed to elevated cancer risk from these businesses. Under these new reforms, the number of residents near these facilities exposed to unacceptable cancer risk ultimately would drop by 96%, according to the EPA.

Federal Agency Advances Portable Generator Safety Rule

The Consumer Product Safety Commission proposed [sweeping new regulations](#) in April to make portable generators safer, citing the increasing number of deaths they cause and the failure of manufacturers to protect consumers. The regulations would require generators to emit less carbon monoxide and to shut off automatically when the deadly gas reaches a certain level. The federal agency's proposal comes in the wake of an investigation by ProPublica, The Texas Tribune and NBC News that revealed [the lack of safeguards](#) underpinning the worst carbon monoxide poisoning event in U.S. history. During a historic 2021 winter storm in Texas, at least 19 residents died from carbon monoxide poisoning, with at least 10 of those deaths involving generators.

California Passes Oil & Gas Protections

Following two separate investigations — a 2021 report by ProPublica and Local Reporting Network Partner

The Desert Sun on [state enforcement after major oil spills](#) or other hazards, and a 2022 report by ProPublica and the Los Angeles Times on [orphaned oil and gas wells](#) — California lawmakers have taken action against fossil fuel companies.

■ In October, California Gov. Gavin Newsom [signed into law a bill](#) to provide the state's taxpayers some of the strongest protections in the nation against having to pay for the cleanup of orphaned oil and gas wells. The legislation requires companies that purchase idle or low-producing wells to set aside enough money to cover the entire cost of cleanup. The Legislature and the bill's supporters repeatedly cited our reporting.

■ Another new law, which went into effect in January 2024, gives state officials more authority to fine oil companies that cause major spills. It increases penalties to as much as \$70,000 per day for continuing violations, and it gives regulators new abilities to request criminal enforcement.

Colorado Passes Bill to Protect Residents, Homes From Wildfires

In May, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis [signed into law](#) a bill that [mandates a statewide wildfire-resistant building code](#), a step that scientists say will help protect residents and first responders as climate change intensifies blazes. The measure passed after a ProPublica investigation found that Colorado regulations [hadn't kept pace with the threat fires pose](#) to the state's urban areas. We reported that previous legislative efforts had been repeatedly stymied by developers and municipalities, while taxpayers shouldered the growing cost of rebuilding after the fires. Before this bill, Colorado was one of only eight states without a minimum construction standard for homes.

Technology

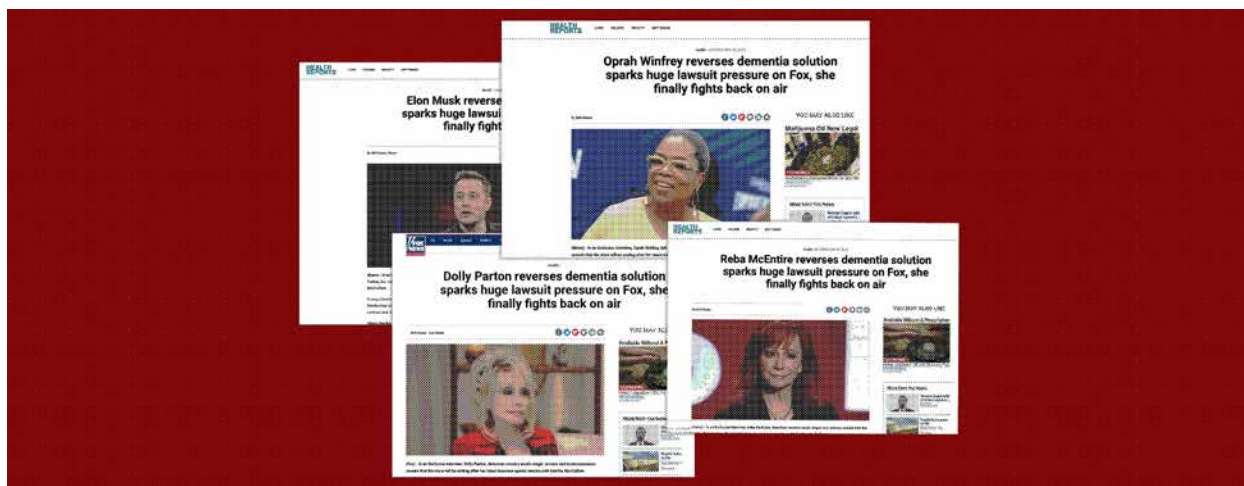


Illustration by ProPublica. Source Images: Screenshots taken by ProPublica of fake news stories accompanying AdStyle ads.

Ad Network Removes Scam With Fake Celebrity Endorsements

A mysterious network called AdStyle has been [placing ads with fake endorsements from celebrities](#) such as Oprah Winfrey and Elon Musk on conservative sites based in the U.S. and abroad. After reporters contacted the company, AdStyle removed investment and dementia scam ads from the network. “We have taken immediate action to reinforce our systems and processes, working diligently to enhance our ad approval mechanisms to better prevent the appearance of misleading or low-quality advertisements,” the company said in an unsigned email. “We are actively reviewing and refining our content moderation policies.”

Meta Bans Suspected Instagram Scammer

ProPublica [investigated a mysterious fraudster](#) known as OBN who claims to have made hundreds of thousands of dollars off of influencers by exploiting Instagram’s security gaps. OBN is part of a booming underground community of Instagram scammers and hackers who shut down the profiles of influencers on the social network and then demand payment to reactivate them. Within weeks of ProPublica contacting Meta with evidence linking OBN to a 20-year-old

man in Las Vegas (who denied being OBN when questioned by a reporter), Meta sent him a cease and desist letter and banned him from its platforms.

Senator Warren Investigates Google’s Hunt for Soldiers’ Medical Data

Referring to ProPublica’s [investigation published in December 2022](#), Sen. Elizabeth Warren has [begun investigating](#) Google’s efforts to collect medical information derived from biopsy specimens of millions of military service members, overseen by the military’s Joint Pathology Center. Our report found that in late 2015, Google began to gather the information, which it planned to use to build AI tools to potentially aid the diagnosis and treatment of cancer and other diseases. At least a dozen Defense Department staff members have raised ethical or legal concerns about privacy, favoritism and the private use of a sensitive government resource. In a statement, a Google spokesperson attributed the ethics complaints to an “inter-agency issue” and a “personnel dispute.” He noted that all of Google’s health care partnerships involve “the strictest controls” over data. In response to questions from ProPublica, the Joint Pathology Center said none of its deidentified data would be shared during its modernization process unless it met the ethical, regulatory and legal approvals needed to ensure it was done in the right way.

Trump Administration

Words of Conviction

Tracing a Junk Science Through the Justice System

The Insurrection

The Effort to Overturn the Election

more than a decade, a training program known as 911 call analysis and a...
read across the country and... flowed deep into the justice system.



Environment



The Cold War Legacy Lurking in U.S. Groundwater

OJAs



by Mark Hildebrand, Julie Simon and Alex Mirjeski, video by Gerardo del Valle, Liz Moughon and Mauricio Rodriguez Pons

Dec. 3, 2021, 6:51 a.m. EST

Recognition for Our Work

This year ProPublica received many of journalism's highest honors, including a National Magazine Award, a George Polk Award, and a Pulitzer Prize finalist designation. A [full list of awards](#) that ProPublica and partners won is on our website. Here are some of the year's highlights.

Collage by Lisa Larson-Walker/ProPublica.

Democracy
**The Fight
Age-Old
Block Ar
From Vo**
by Aliyya Swaby and
Sept. 13, 2021, 5:07 a.m.



After Amanda Duffy's daughter was stillborn in 2014, she decided to turn her grief into action. Jenn Ackerman, special to ProPublica

Pulitzer Prize Finalist — Explanatory Reporting
“Stillbirths”

National Magazine Award — Feature Writing
“The Landlord & The Tenant” (with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

George Polk Award — Justice Reporting
“Words of Conviction”

Robert F. Kennedy Book and Journalism Award — Domestic Print
“Culture of Cruelty”

Scripps Howard Award — Excellence in Environmental Reporting
“Barbados Resists Climate Colonialism in an Effort to Survive the Costs of Global Warming” (with The New York Times Magazine)

Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism
“The Price Kids Pay” (with the Chicago Tribune)

IRE Award — Print/Online
“The Price Kids Pay” (with the Chicago Tribune)

Edward R. Murrow Awards — Multiple Categories
“Plot to Overturn the Election” (with PBS’ FRONTLINE) won the news documentary category
“A Uranium Ghost Town in the Making” (with the Los Angeles Times) won the hard news category
“Meet the Woman Fighting for the Rights of Voters Who Can’t Read” won the excellence in video category
“The Night Raids” won the excellence in writing category
“Wy-Kan-Ush-Pum (Salmon People): A Native Fishing Family’s Fight to Preserve a Way of Life” (with Oregon Public Broadcasting) won the news documentary category

Hillman Prize for Magazine Journalism
“Endgame” (with The New Yorker)

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Investigative Reporting
“The Price Kids Pay”



Partners

Partners have been a vital part of ProPublica since our founding. In 2023 we partnered with 78 publishing and reporting partners. We collaborated with 28 new partners, bringing our historic total to 307 organizations.

Arturo Núñez is a 73-year-old former truck driver who was a longtime tenant at the American Hotel in downtown Los Angeles before he was driven out by a bedbug infestation around 2013. Barbara Davidson for ProPublica



Barbara and James Johnson sit in their living room in Newport News, Virginia July 2023. They built the home on family property almost 60 years ago. Christopher Tyree/VCIJ at WHRO

Partner Spotlight

■ In “Uprooted,” a series with ProPublica Local Reporting Partner **Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism at WHRO**, reporter Brandi Kellam, with Louis Hansen and Chris Tyree, detailed how Christopher Newport University and other [Virginia universities have displaced Black families](#), sometimes through the use of eminent domain, to make room for campus facilities, exacerbating the racial gap in home ownership and the loss of Black-owned land in the state. The newsrooms partnered with **The Chronicle of Higher Education** and **Essence** to share the story with diverse audiences throughout the country. Following publication, CNU acknowledged the “human cost” of its expansion and the need to “learn about and understand our complicated history,” and state officials are calling for displaced families to receive redress, from scholarships to reparations. Spurred by reporting from the series, the city of Newport News, Virginia, and CNU are creating a joint task force to reexamine decades of city and university records shedding light on the Shoe Lane neighborhood’s destruction. VCIJ, in collaboration with ProPublica’s Dan Golden, Lisa Riordan Seville and Mauricio Rodriguez Pons, also produced a documentary short that explores the painful history behind the location of CNU’s campus, weaving the story of one family, the Johnsons, who are among

the last remaining residents of a once-thriving Black community in Newport News.

■ ProPublica joined forces with another Local Reporting Network partner, **The Idaho Statesman**, to show how Idaho’s restrictive school funding policies and the state Legislature’s reluctance to make significant investments in school facilities have impacted students and teachers. Students have had to learn in freezing classrooms and overcrowded schools, with leaky ceilings, failing plumbing and discolored drinking water. Statesman reporter Becca Savransky also found that Idaho hasn’t done a full assessment of school building conditions in nearly 30 years. To fill this gap, Savransky teamed up with ProPublica engagement reporter Asia Fields to understand the deteriorating conditions and consequences plaguing underfunded schools in the state. The reporting team surveyed every superintendent in Idaho about school conditions, and 91% of them responded. They worked with communities to bring together a [unique presentation of data, documentation and visual evidence](#) showing the daily experiences of students and educators across the state. In January 2024, Idaho Gov. Brad Little cited the stories in calling for \$2 billion in school facilities funding in his State of the State speech and budget proposal.

All Partners, 2023

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in bold.*

Background: Collage by ProPublica of pages from *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Back page: AFP via Getty Images.

Audience Snapshot

ProPublica works to get its findings to 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.

2.9 million

Average Monthly On-Platform Visitors

Our unique reach on ProPublica's web and mobile platform increased, despite downward or flat industry trends. Up 25% from the 2022 average.

2.5 million

Average Monthly Off-Platform Visitors

Our unique reach on third-party platforms such as Apple News and SmartNews has increased. Up 31% from the 2022 average.

13.5 million

Average Monthly Views

Our total views on ProPublica's web and mobile platforms and third-party platforms, such as Apple News and SmartNews, have surged. Up 37% from the 2022 average.

2+ million

Total Social Media Followers

We established strong presences on Threads and other alternatives to X, formerly known as Twitter, and have had noteworthy growth reaching new audiences with short-form video on TikTok and Instagram. Up 43% from the 2022 average.

581,000

Unique Newsletter Subscribers

Nearly 600,000 unique readers subscribe to at least one of our major newsletters. Up 15% from the 2022 average.

1,579

Republished Articles

This tally includes local, national and international print and digital publications that republish our work. Down 30% from the 2022 average.

137,862

Media Mentions

Mentions of our work on TV, radio and podcasts and in print and digital outlets were up 216% from the 2022 average.

10,989

Event Attendees

We held 25 in-person and virtual events. Up 35% from the 2022 average.

Financial Information, 2023

Annual revenue for 2023 came in at approximately \$45 million. At the end of the year, cumulative reserves were valued at \$43 million, representing unrestricted cash equivalents and investments not needed for immediate business use. A strong finish to the year's fundraising allowed ProPublica to increase its cumulative reserve, providing an important cushion in case of a financial downturn.

Revenues

Board of Directors contributions and related grants	\$6,285,000
Foundations	\$15,910,000
Individuals (\$10,000 and above)	\$11,451,000
Individuals (less than \$10,000)	\$9,409,000
Other grants and gifts	\$ 1,176,000
Earned income and interest	\$1,055,000
Total	\$45,286,000

Expenses

News salaries, payments and benefits	\$28,046,000
Non-news salaries and benefits	\$5,354,000
Partner payments and freelance reporting	\$2,331,000
Online publishing, design and visuals	\$1,528,000
Travel, research and all other editorial expenses	\$1,619,000
Occupancy	\$1,721,000
Insurance, legal, accounting and banking	\$1,261,000
Fundraising, IT and all other administrative expenses	\$1,979,000
Capital costs	\$89,000
Total	\$43,928,000

Total donors: more than 54,500

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

Cumulative reserves are calculated as the value of unrestricted cash/cash and investments at year end that are not needed for immediate business use.

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