

Executive Summary

Local Journalism That Makes a Difference

While the eyes of the national media have focused on subjects such as the COVID-19 pandemic, presidential politics and the war in Ukraine (important topics, and ones on which <u>ProPublica has added unique, revelatory stories</u> that were otherwise <u>not being told</u>), there's also a great deal to uncover at the local level. In the first four months of the year, our newsroom continued to shine much-needed sunlight on the often-overlooked dealings of local government, industries and other institutions.

Recent stories, for example, have exposed a billionaire-backed group that is <u>altering Wisconsin's election policies</u> in response to unsupported claims of voter fraud, Chicago's "race-neutral" traffic cameras that <u>ticket Black and Latino drivers the most</u> and <u>Texas school board races with a troublingly partisan tone</u>.

Policymakers are paying attention. Much of our local reporting has yielded significant impact.

In the Southwest, last year we investigated the failure of welfare reform. One story in the series reported that single mothers in New Mexico seeking welfare assistance are forced to identify their child's father, including information about his employment and

bank account. The government then uses these details to pursue child support from the fathers — which the state pockets as reimbursement for providing welfare. In March of this year, state law was changed to allow child support to go directly to children instead of being diverted into government coffers.

In April, ProPublica and the Chicago Tribune found that, despite a state law banning schools from fining students for disciplinary reasons, <u>Illinois school officials are referring students to the police</u>, who ticket thousands of pupils a year for vaping, truancy and other violations that would have previously landed them in the principal's office. Hours after the story was published, Illinois State Superintendent of Education Carmen Ayala <u>urged schools to stop working with police to ticket students for misbehavior</u>.

A ProPublica investigation with The Marshall Project and NBC News in March revealed deplorable conditions at a high-security lockup for teenagers in St. Martinville, Louisiana. Teens at the center were kept in solitary confinement around the clock and shackled when they were allowed to leave their cells. The following month, Louisiana lawmakers passed a

Cover: Jacorious Brinkley was incarcerated as a child at the Rutherford County juvenile detention center, after being deemed a "true threat." (Stacy Kranitz, special to ProPublica)

Table of Contents: The ExxonMobil Baytown complex is seen from Oklahoma Street in Baytown. (Kathleen Flynn for ProPublica)

When Alyssa Davis applied for public assistance in Albuquerque, she was hassled about child support requirements. (Adria Malcolm, special to ProPublica)

Young men walk near a burning sugar cane field in Florida's Glades. (Thomas Cordy/The Palm Beach Post)

bill that would <u>place strict limits on the use of solitary</u> confinement for youth.

Local journalism was also among our most recognized work in a number of prestigious contests. Our Local Reporting Network collaboration with Nashville Public Radio's WPLN News on widespread abuses in a Tennessee juvenile justice system was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing and won the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting and the John Jay College/Harry Frank Guggenheim Award for Excellence in Criminal Justice Reporting. "Black Snow: Big Sugar's Burning Problem," a project with The Palm Beach Post, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for local reporting and won the McElheny Award for Local Science Reporting. A project with the Miami Herald, exposing the failures of a Florida program designed to compensate parents when their babies are born with brain damage, won the George Polk Award for state reporting and the Collier Prize for State Government Accountability.

ProPublica sought to build a sustainable network of local investigative journalism in response to a decline in local reporting that has left many communities without the information they need to be able to hold powerful interests accountable. Along with our continued focus on national stories — including recent work on the last days of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, the industry creating shadow credit scores that decide whether renters can secure housing and the small group of people responsible for spreading the belief that the 2020 presidential election was stolen — we are proud to see our efforts meaningfully address these gaps in local coverage.







Business and Labor

Richard Borge, special to ProPublica

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

In 2019, we showed how TurboTax lures people into using the tax filing 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 early May, 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.

Detroit City Council Calls for a Moratorium on Power Shut-Offs

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. The story also found that residents in Detroit, one of the nation's poorest cities, pay some of the highest electricity rates in the country.

Weeks after our investigation was published, the Detroit City Council passed a resolution calling for DTE to enact a one-year pause on power shut-offs, "given the lasting economic impacts of the pandemic, thereby giving its customers some relief." The City Council sent its request to DTE executives and its board of directors. The resolution also asked them to explain the company's high electricity rates.





Alex Bandoni/ProPublica; Source Images: Getty Images.

New Legislation Targets 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 last October. Yet McKinsey never told the agency about its work with drugmakers, including the companies responsible for making and distributing the opioids that have ravaged communities across the United States.

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.

Congressional Chair Enlists Apple and Google to Help Fight Cybercriminals

In July 2021, ProPublica investigated what may turn out to be the biggest fraud wave 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, 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 that forbid apps that facilitate or promote illegal activities, and he asked the companies for records showing what they know about the problem.



Timo Lenzen, special to ProPublica

Senators Ask Chase to Explain Lawsuit Blitz on Customers

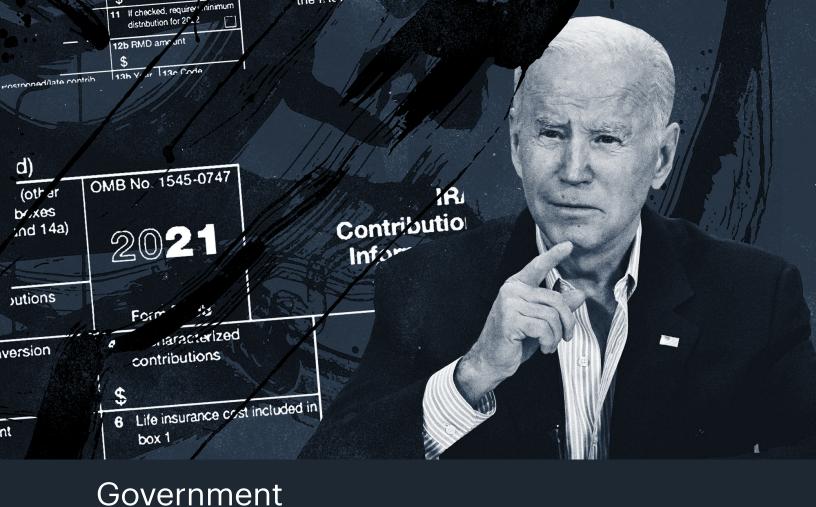
JPMorgan Chase had publicly pledged to pause mortgage, auto and credit card payments during the pandemic, and for a decade the bank held back from suing indebted customers. But a January investigation by ProPublica and The Capitol Forum showed that, since early 2020, Chase filed lawsuits against thousands 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.

READER FEEDBACK

"You have one of the best data operations I know of and have had since your beginning. The maps using EPA data on toxic chemical emissions and USDA inspections of chicken processing plants are just two examples. That's invaluable to all of us.."

-Norm in Oregon



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 April, the administration of President Joe Biden released a proposal that directly addresses this issue. The plan would introduce 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 Investigation on Jan. 6 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 that immediately preceded

the Capitol riot, ProPublica reported in November 2021. In Jan. 4 texts 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 election. Citing this text exchange, the House of Representatives select committee investigating the attack on the Capitol issued a subpoena in March to Guilfoyle, the first member of the Trump family circle to receive one. Guilfoyle denies any wrongdoing.

States Change Welfare Policies to Give Assistance Directly to Families

A ProPublica series in September 2021 explored the state of welfare in the Southwest, where the poor face punitive requirements in order to get assistance. Prompted by our reporting, several Southwestern states are reconsidering their approach to welfare, including new legislation to ensure that more assistance is available for low-income families.

READER FEEDBACK

"One reason I love ProPublica: Intelligent use of interactive maps. Place is our strongest sense. This is an excellent way to help people connect with real data."

-Melissa in North Carolina

ProPublica spoke with mothers in Albuquerque, including Amberly Sanchez, above, and Alyssa Davis, below, about their experiences with the child support requirements of New Mexico's cash assistance program. (Adria Malcolm, special to ProPublica)

- 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, 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, state lawmakers introduced a bill that would increase the amount of cash assistance available to poor parents. The legislation would also extend the limit, currently the shortest in the nation, on the number of months that these families can receive aid.







Lawyer Melissa Jackson at a legal office in Waynesville, North Carolina, with documents from Molly and Heaven Cordell's cases. Heaven Cordell, right, and her sister were illegally separated from their family and placed in hidden foster care as teens. (Elinor Carucci/The New York Times)

Sarah Esler, second from left, with her daughters, Mya, left, and Audrey, second from right, and her mother, Brenda Crapse, right. Mya and Audrey were taken from Esler after an anonymous report was made that she had allowed her 12-year-old to drive. (Elinor Carucci/The New York Times)



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 to begin with. 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."





Mike Kahikina served on the Hawaiian Homes Commission from 2011 to 2019. He was stunned to learn that the federal government was selling ancestral lands to other parties. (Cindy Ellen Russell/Honolulu Star-Advertiser)

Lawmakers Approve \$600 Million to Help Return Native Hawaiians to Ancestral Lands

In 2020, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser and ProPublica investigated the failure of the 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 200,000-acre 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 building sprawling homes that are too expensive for many beneficiaries who can't qualify for a mortgage. The state has awarded just 8,400 residential leases, with a waitlist that's grown to 23,000 people. In January, state lawmakers proposed legislation (which passed in early May) to infuse \$600 million into the Native land program to address the huge demand for affordable housing among Native Hawaiians.

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

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 any benefits to the poor have not yet materialized from the program, wealthy and politically connected billionaires have reaped the tax break's rewards. Developers around the country successfully lobbied to get well-off areas included into the opportunity zone program that should have never qualified in the first place, for projects that benefited the affluent.

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. In a letter to Related Group, Kushner Companies and several other developers, Wyden asked for details on how they are using the opportunity zone program.



Criminal Justice

Chloe Cushman, special to ProPublica

Maine Hires Its First Public Defenders

Until this year, Maine was the only state in the country without a public defender system. Instead, as The Maine Monitor and ProPublica reported in 2020, 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 of 2022, as part of efforts to reform Maine's defense system, 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 direct legal representation to defendants who cannot afford their own lawyer.

Lawmakers Pass Bill to Limit 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. In April Louisiana law-makers passed a bill, citing our reporting, that would place strict limits on the use of solitary confinement for youth in the state.

READER FEEDBACK

"ProPublica embodies the foundational mission of a free press: You shine a bright spotlight into dark corners of the places where the powerful and wealthy do their work."

-John in Wisconsin



Pennsylvania Pays Victims of Illegal Traffic Stops

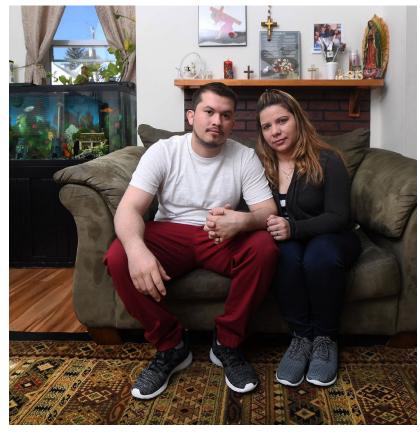
In 2018, ProPublica and The Philadelphia Inquirer reported on tactics used by Pennsylvania police officers to help Immigration and Customs Enforcement round up immigrants for deportation, including the questioning and arrests of Latino drivers during traffic stops. In April, Pennsylvania agreed to pay \$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.



Brothers Osman and Jonatan Aroche-Enriquez. A state trooper stopped them for an expired tag and then called U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (Jose F. Moreno/ Philadelphia Inquirer)

> Route I-81 near Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania (Jose F. Moreno/ Philadelphia Inquirer)

Yancarlos Mendoza back home with his wife, Melonie, after being turned over to ICE by a state trooper. (Jose F. Moreno/Philadelphia Inquirer)





Evangeline Gallagher, special to ProPublica

DOJ Report 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, and lawmakers had known 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. This April 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 isolation in solitary confinement in egregious conditions. DOJ officials also said Mississippi's corrections commissioner has implemented changes.

READER FEEDBACK

"I feel it's very important to support 'unbought' journalism that shares my prodemocracy and pro-fairness values. I want to be informed of things I would otherwise have no way of knowing, by professional journalists and editors who hold high ethical values and professional standards. Thanks for being a lighthouse."

-Aleda in Illinois



Environment

Above: The Chevron refinery in Pascagoula, Mississippi, exceeded the EPA's benzene guidelines. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica) Below Right: Michael S. Regan, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, tours of Cancer Alley. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)

EPA Takes Action to Combat Industrial Air Pollution

A groundbreaking ProPublica report in November 2021 revealed that air pollution from industrial plants has elevated the cancer risk of more than a fifth of the nation's population. Weeks after the investigation was published, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan pledged to ramp up enforcement activities. In January 2022, he announced next steps, including a significant expansion of air monitoring in some of the country's most polluted neighborhoods.

The agency launched a new Pollution Accountability Team to improve the EPA's capacity to measure contaminants, using a plane to track emissions from above while inspectors monitor the air from the ground. 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 also announced a new wave of unannounced inspections of industrial polluters.









Missouri Launches Cancer Study on Links to Toxic Air Pollution

ProPublica's investigation on industrial air pollution included a first-of-its-kind data analysis and map that showed more than 1,000 hot spots of toxic air across the country. In response to our reporting, 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 last December, Mayor Joseph Heck demanded that government officials look into the local cancer rate.

In March, the state Health Department confirmed his 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. Non-Hodgkin lymphoma is linked to ethylene oxide, a potent carcinogen released by the BCP Ingredients plant in town. The Health Department formed a committee of health and environmental experts to open an inquiry, in addition to asking local cancer patients to fill out a health survey that could prompt additional study from the EPA.



The BCP Ingredients facility in Verona is a known emitter of ethylene oxide, a carcinogen. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)

Pamela Dorton hopes a state investigation can shed light on the health impacts of carcinogens in Verona. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)

Verona, Missouri, Mayor Joseph Heck during an Environmental Protection Agency meeting at the high school gym. To his left is his partner, Crystal Payne, who is battling cancer. (Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica)







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

U.S. Agency Plans 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.

■ 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.



Healthcare

Above: Illustration by Charlotte Ager for ProPublica. Below Right: Inspectors repeatedly found manufacturing and device quality problems with the HeartWare heart pump. (Mark Pernice, special to 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 FDA and the device 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, uncovering 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.







NICA promised to cover medical expenses, but some parents reported a bureaucratic nightmare that was anything but supportive. (Illustrations by Charlotte Ager for ProPublica)

Lawmakers Approve Payments to Families Whose Children Died of Brain Injuries

In April 2021, the Miami Herald and ProPublica reported on Florida's Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Association (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 — sometimes spending tens of thousands more in legal fees fighting requests for benefits than it would cost to help parents who depend on the program to care for their children.

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, 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.





Education

Above: 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) Below right: At Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School, the school resource officer watches students. (Armando L. Sanchez/Chicago Tribune)

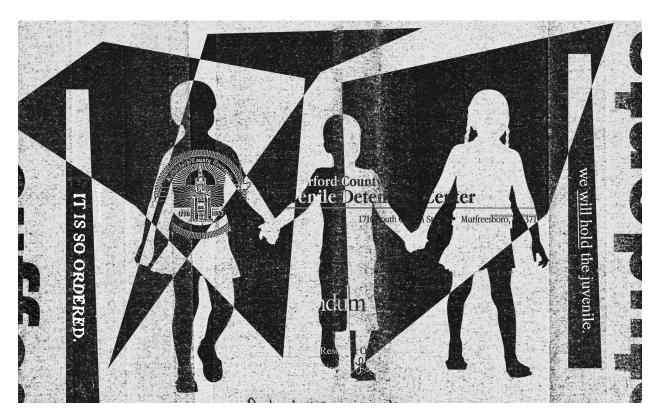
Top Education Official Urges Schools to Limit Referrals to Police

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 found that, despite a state law banning schools from fining students for disciplinary reasons, officials are referring students to the police and 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 and warned that it will investigate "noncompliance with state law, where appropriate, and work with lawmakers to close loopholes in state law."





Mark Harris for ProPublica

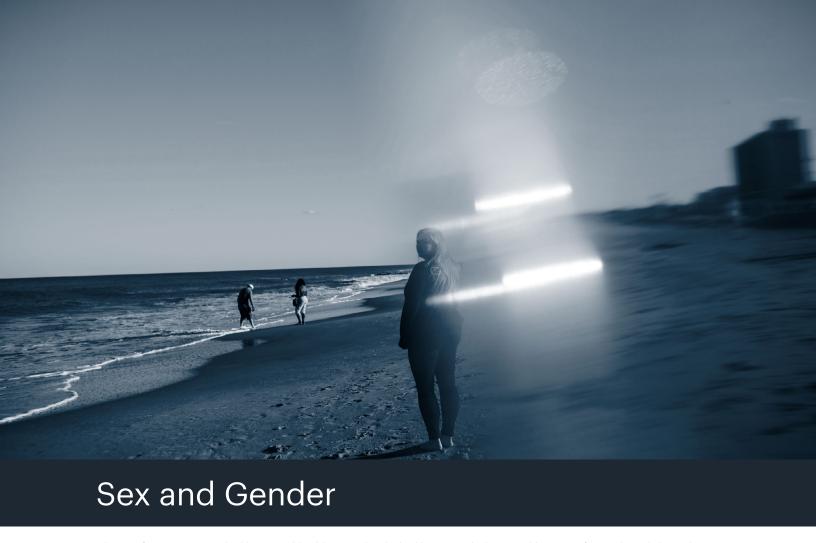
Lawmakers Fund the Removal of Toxic Chemicals From School

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 very high levels of carbon dioxide and chemicals known as PCBs that the EPA has linked to cancers and other illnesses. What's more, the school knew.

Health inspectors have warned school officials about PCBs since at least 2014, we reported, but Washington state law does not require schools or health departments to act on those findings. 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 protectw students from exposure to harmful substances.

Tennessee Judge Who Illegally Jailed Children Will Step Down

In October 2021, Nashville Public Radio and ProPublica investigated the juvenile justice system in Rutherford County, Tennessee, where, under the watch of Judge Donna Scott Davenport, the county locked up kids in nearly half the cases referred to juvenile court. In one incident, 11 kids were handcuffed and arrested at school — the youngest just 8 years old for watching boys scuffle and not stepping in to stop it, with four of the children booked in juvenile jail. Children in Rutherford County were often jailed for vague "crimes" that did not exist, and many were held in solitary confinement. The county was also jailing a disproportionately high percentage of Black children. After the story's publication, amid growing outcry from community leaders and Tennessee lawmakers, as well as the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, in January, Davenport announced that she will step down this year rather than run for reelection.



Above: After Diane Stargel told a mental health counselor she had been raped, she was told to sign a form acknowledging she may have broken the Liberty Way. (Sarah Blesener for ProPublica) Below Right: "I never considered not reporting what had happened to me," said Elizabeth Axley. (Sarah Blesener for ProPublica)

University's Handling of Sexual Assult 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 University'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 pledged its "full cooperation" with the investigation.







Still from the "American Insurrection" documentary by ProPublica and PBS Frontline

Our collaboration with Nashville Public Radio's WPLN News on **the juvenile justice system in Rutherford County, Tennessee**, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. It won the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting, the John Jay College/Harry Frank Guggenheim Award for Excellence in Criminal Justice Reporting and the News Leaders Association's Dori J. Maynard Justice Award, and it was also a finalist for the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting and the National Magazine Award for feature writing.

"Black Snow: Big Sugar's Burning Problem," a project by The Palm Beach Post and ProPublica, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for local reporting. It won the McElheny Award for Local Science Reporting, a Sigma Award in the single project category and a Society for News Design Bronze Medal for environment and science. It was a second-place finalist for the Philip Meyer Journalism Award and a finalist for the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation's Digital Media Award.

"American Insurrection," a documentary by Pro-Publica, PBS Frontline and the University of California, Berkeley Investigative Journalism Program, won the George Polk Award for national television reporting.

"Birth Rights," a ProPublica Local Reporting Network project by the Miami Herald, won the George Polk Award for state reporting, the Collier Prize for

State Government Accountability and a National Headliner Award for public service in newspapers, and is a finalist for the Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma.

"The Secret IRS Files" won the Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting, the Hillman Prize in the web journalism category, the Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing's Best in Business Award for economics, the Investigative Reporters & Editors' IRE Award for print/online and a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for coverage of business. It was a finalist for the Anthony Shadid Award for Journalism Ethics and is finalist for a Webby Award in the how-to, explainer and DIY video category.

"Sacrifice Zones: Mapping Cancer-Causing Industrial Air Pollution," a collaboration with The Texas Tribune and Mountain State Spotlight, won the Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing's Best in Business Award for innovation; the Association of Health Care Journalists Award in the public health category; the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation's Digital Media Award; and four Society for News Design Awards of Excellence in the categories of use of animation, use of maps, environment and health, and social media design. It was a finalist for the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting and the National Magazine Award for public

interest, and it received an honorable mention from the SABEW Best in Business Award in the health/science category.

"Unchecked: America's Broken Food Safety System" won the Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing's Best in Business Award in the investigative category, the Association of Health Care Journalists Award for consumer/feature, a Society for News Design Award of Excellence for health and an SND Award of Excellence for use of commissioned illustration. It received an honorable mention from the SABEW Best in Business Award in the government category.

"What Parler Saw During the Attack on the Capitol" won the Investigative Reporters & Editors' IRE Award for breaking news, a Society for News Design Bronze Award for breaking news and an SND Award of Excellence for use of video.

In a tie, reporting by The Texas Tribune and Pro-Publica on **the 2021 Texas winter storm** also won the Investigative Reporters & Editors' IRE Award for breaking news.

"Invisible Threat: Carbon Monoxide's Unchecked Toll," a collaboration between ProPublica, The Texas Tribune and NBC News, won the Association of Health Care Journalists Award in the investigative category and a Texas Association of Managing Editors Award for star investigative report of the year, and won third place for the National Headliner Award in the category of online investigative reporting for digital partnerships.

A portfolio of **ProPublica data reporting projects** won the Sigma Award in the portfolio category.

Our investigation on the **Milton Hershey School** with the Philadelphia Inquirer and Spotlight PA won the National Headliner Award for education writing.

"Sound of Judgment" by News & Observer and ProPublica won a regional Emmy from the Nashville/ Midsouth chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. It is a finalist for a Webby Award in the news and politics video category.

Our film "**Unlivable Oasis**" is a finalist for a Covering Climate Now Journalism Award in the Video-Long Feature category, was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for video, and received an honorable mention from the Shaufler Prize in Journalism.

Our reporting on a child care provider on the brink of collapse during the pandemic was a finalist for the National Magazine Award for profile writing.





Anup Johny, a food safety microbiologist, works with turkeys to help fight salmonella before outbreaks occur. (Ackerman + Gruber, special to ProPublica)

Jackie Thomas and her daughter Yolanda, caring for kids at home in Lee's Summit, Missouri. (Arin Yoon, special to ProPublica).



Norman Williams' father, A.W. Williams, was one of the founders of Illinois Federal Savings and Loan, later renamed GN Bank. After a change in ownership, it is now Chicago's last Black-owned bank. (Danielle Scruggs, special to ProPublica)

Reporting on **COVID-19's hidden toll on Black and Latino Americans** won the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award for best online health or science reporting on COVID-19, and was a finalist for the Lisagor Award for best investigative/public service online reporting and best illustration.

"Lost Inside America's Shadow Foster System" is a finalist for the Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma, and reporter Lizzie Presser is a finalist for the Livingston Award for national reporting.

Hannah Dreyfus, an Abrams Reporting Fellow at ProPublica, is a finalist for the Livingston Award for national reporting for her work on "The Liberty Way: How Liberty University Discourages and Dismisses Students' Reports of Sexual Assaults."

"Welfare States" was a third-place finalist for the Collier Prize for State Government Accountability.

"Gilded Badges: How New Jersey Cops Profit From Police Unions and Avoid Accountability" by the Asbury Park Press and ProPublica was a third-place finalist for the Philip Meyer Journalism Award. It was a finalist for the Deadline Club Award in the newspaper or digital beat reporting category.

"HeartWare: Deadly Malfunctions, FDA Inaction and Vulnerable Patients" was a finalist for the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation's General Circulation Journalism Award.

"**Tethered to the Machine**" was a second-place finalist for the Shaufler Prize in Journalism.

Our investigation on **how white conservationists are changing life in a Black farming community** was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Awards for best investigative/public service online reporting, best photography and best online photography, while reporter Tony Briscoe is a finalist for the Livingston Award for national reporting.

"The Murder Chicago Didn't Want to Solve" was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for best feature story.

A series on **Chicago's last Black-owned bank** was a finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for best online business or consumer reporting.

Our **news applications, data visualizations and design** won 15 honors from the Society for News Design, including SND Awards of Excellence in the categories of use of video, use of animation, use of photography, use of commissioned illustration, use of maps, social media design, environment and health, health, coverage of business, art direction (staff or team) and story page design (staff or team). **Visuals Editor Andrea Wise won the National Press Photographers Association's Best of Photojournalism Award** for still-picture editing in the digital general news category.



Partners

Partners have been a vital part of ProPublica since our founding. Over the past few months we extended our list, including both publishing and reporting partners, to 251 news organizations.

> In a story with Alive in Afghanistan, we reported firsthand accounts of the final days of the U.S. War in Afghanistan. Journalist Razia Haidari had gotten married just days before the fall of Kabul. (Oriane Zerah for ProPublica)



Gloria Lowe runs We Want Green Too, a nonprofit that studied the energy burden in Detroit. (Nick Hagen for ProPublica)

Partner Spotlight

- Reporter 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 and deprived of an education.
- 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 have prompted calls to enact a one-year moratorium on shut-offs.
- Nashville Public Radio journalist Meribah Knight was on other assignments in 2016 when 11 Tennessee schoolchildren were arrested for allegedly watching kids scuffle and not stepping in to stop it. Some of the children, the youngest just 8 years old, were hand-cuffed. The story stuck with her, so five years later she partnered with our Local Reporting Network and ProPublica's Ken Armstrong to learn more. Their 2021 series detailed systemic issues that allowed those arrests (and subsequent jailings) to happen, spurring immediate demands for reform. Now Knight is continuing the investigation for a second year, crafting a podcast about what went wrong.



Rebecca McDonald 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)

All Partners, January-April 2022

- Advocate
- Alive in Afghanistan
- Anchorage Daily News
- APM Reports
- Capitol Forum
- Chicago Tribune
- Chronicle of Higher Education
- The City
- Detroit Free Press
- El Paso Matters
- Frontline
- Honolulu Star-Advertiser
- Maine Monitor
- Marshall Project

- Miami Herald
- Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting
- Nashville Public Radio
- NBC News
- New Yorker
- New York Times
- New York Times Magazine
- Outlier Media
- Palm Beach Post
- **■** Rocky Mountain PBS
- San Francisco Public Press
- Seattle Times
- Southern Illinoisan
- Texas Tribune

PROPUBLICA IMPACT REPORT, JANUARY-APRIL 2022