

The NEWS JOURNAL ETHICS POLICY

Addendum to Gannett's Newspaper Division Principles of Ethical Conduct

Coverage

We put the public first. We strive to protect ordinary citizens against abuse by the powerful. American newspapers historically are part of the checks and balances envisioned by the founding fathers. We believe this newspaper exists primarily to tell you what you need to know to govern your life. We hold this obligation to the public above our private interests as reporters and as a newspaper. Nothing matters to us more than keeping the public's trust. We aspire to deserve the reputation that, if we publish it, you can believe it.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is not a right that was granted newspapers. It is a right granted every citizen, a right the public insisted upon the first time Congress improved upon the basic laws governing our nation. It was first among the Bill of Rights citizens demanded to protect themselves from their government. The rights of free speech and free press are only as firm as the commitment to them by people like you. We view the First Amendment rights of this newspaper as the embodiment of your rights. When The News Journal defends the First Amendment or relies upon its great legal shield, we try to remain true to the public spirit that demands the fundamental right to know the truth. We do not hide behind the First Amendment to tell anything less than the whole public story.

We treat people from all walks of life with respect and sensitivity.

We are guided by the highest standard of journalism and by common sense. We are committed to providing the news and information people need.

Quoted Material

In The News Journal, quotation marks signify that the words lying between them are exactly what the person said. Reporters must ensure that the quote is complete enough to contain the full scope of what was said, and that it is placed in proper context, with proper emphasis, within the story. Accurate quotes can still create a misrepresentation of a statement when they are misused or misplaced.

Ellipses may be used in quoted material to stand for missing words and phrases only when their removal does not significantly alter the quote's meaning. Use them sparingly.

Words may be changed or added so long as they are placed in brackets and only when absolutely necessary for the reader's understanding. Grammar, dialect and sentence construction should remain as the person said it, unless an exact representation of the person's statement would make it seem to the reader that the newspaper is holding the person up to ridicule. If the material within quotations has been taken from a written sentence, it should be clearly identified as such.

Editing

Editors should make every effort to ensure that in editing stories, changes of significance are reviewed with the reporter before publication. This is a priority for ensuring the accuracy of our work.

Diversity

Bigotry and prejudice have no place at The News Journal. We want our staff, the news sources we turn to and the stories we publish to reflect our diverse world, including differences in race, religious and ethnic background, age, sexual orientation, body size, physical and mental ability, and income and educational level. We vigilantly guard against broad-brush approaches to stories, headlines, photos, photo captions and graphics that stereotype individuals or entire communities.

And we expect that our staff will treat all members of the public with respect.

Professional Conduct

- We do not pass off the work of others as our own. Plagiarism - whether from published works, electronic materials or The News Journal's own archives - is a breach of journalism ethics. This extends to the work of the wire services. If a report in The News Journal includes significant information from the Associated Press or another wire service, proper credit should be given either in the body of the story or in a tagline.
- We do not pay for the news.
- Staffers must obtain permission of the executive editor or managing editor to ride along with police on the beat or accompany them.

Prepublication Review

News Journal employees should not promise anyone they will be able to review an article before publication as a condition for an interview. For a more thorough discussion of this, please refer to The Principles of Ethical Conduct.

Never promise anyone when or where a story will run.

Privacy

We should be especially sensitive to the privacy concerns of ordinary citizens who are thrust into the news, such as witnesses or crime victims. The value and relevance of publishing such information as names, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and ethnicity should be weighed against respect for individual privacy.

Care should be taken when interviewing or photographing minors – children under age 18. Parental permission is required before quoting minors in stories of a contentious or controversial nature. Similar permission, obtained directly from parents or through a school, is required before publishing photographs of minors.

The newspaper should also consider the privacy of public figures. Although many of these people have thrust themselves into the limelight and are subject to more scrutiny, they may also be entitled to keep some aspects of their private lives private.

Sources

The Gannett Newspaper Division Principles deal with the use of unnamed sources. However, the News Journal rarely uses unnamed sources in copy. Therefore, in addition to adhering to the Newspaper Division Principles, if you believe your story will need to use an unnamed source, you must consult with your editor. We will not publish information from an unnamed source without the approval of the executive editor or managing editor. See the attached Principles of Ethical Conduct for guidance in the use of unnamed sources.

Visual Ethics

Photographs, graphics and illustrations are intended to be authentic representations of people or news events. Photographs should never be altered or significantly modified. The News Journal should only print what the camera recorded. We do not stage news photos or recreate scenes.

It is permissible to create artificial or composite manipulated photo illustrations only when they are clearly labeled and the intent is to illustrate, not deceive.

Improper alterations to a photograph would include the addition or deletion of objects in a photograph, flopping a negative, making a cosmetic enhancement to a scene or combining photographs in a way that

would deceive the reader. Quality control measures, such as those that occur in prepress, are acceptable.

Conflicts of Interest

The appearance of a conflict can be as damaging to our reputation as the actual conflict. In order to maintain credibility, we must scrupulously avoid any activity or behavior – on or off the job -- which might call our independence and impartiality into question. It's impossible to cover every possible conflict situation in an ethics code. The key is to disclose to a supervisor anything that has the potential to raise allegations of conflict of interest.

Outside Activity

As your primary employer, The News Journal Co. has first call on your services. Before agreeing to do any outside work, whether it is related to journalism or not, consult with your supervisor. At the beginning of each calendar year you are required to disclose in writing any outside employment – paid or unpaid - from the previous year.

- You may not work for a competitor, including daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, radio stations or cable stations, whose primary business is in our circulation area.
- You may free-lance for another news outlet not in direct competition with The News Journal, but you must obtain permission from your supervisor.
- Outside work should not have any adverse effects on your work here. When free-lancing for other media outlets do not scoop The News Journal Co., your primary employer.
- Because on-line services are global in nature, before doing any work for an electronic media outlet, reporters and editors need the managing editor's or the executive editor's permission. Some magazines and newspapers also have broad reach, and you would need that same permission. When in doubt, ask.
- Remember that your name on work for other outlets that are not in competition with our newspaper could reflect on The News Journal both positively and negatively. Therefore, it's important to consider the credibility of the other media outlet.
- Stories done for The News Journal are the property of the company and may not be sold by you to another publication as a free-lance piece without permission from the editor.

Community Involvement

You are encouraged to be involved in activities that put you in touch with the community to the extent that it does not compromise the newspaper. All of us need to use good judgment in choosing those activities, keeping in mind how our involvement might reflect on the paper. You should let your supervisor know of your involvement in community groups so both of you can determine whether there is the appearance of a conflict. There are a few guidelines to keep in mind:

- Fundraising and public relations assignments should be avoided. They pose the greatest potential conflict of interest.
- Do not accept a high-profile position in any major outside group that falls within the newspaper's coverage area. Avoid putting yourself in the position where you could become a newsmaker. It's permissible to hold office in a group that generates little news (e.g. church, bridge club or alumni chapter). If you have concerns, consult top editors.
- Employees should not report, write, photograph or edit stories about organizations in which they are involved.
- If asked to participate as a panelist or commentator on radio, television or educational programs, check with your supervisor. Do not voice opinions you would not be permitted to voice in print, and make sure your position with the newspaper is clear.

Political Involvement

The same guidelines appear here as above. Participating in the democratic process is a privilege and a duty. You should keep your supervisor informed of your activities and use good judgment. The same goes for expressing your opinion on issues. If you speak up at an abortion rally or drive a car with a political candidate's bumper sticker, you should expect to cover neither abortion nor the election.

Financial Interests

The guiding principle here is that reporters and editors should not invest in companies they cover on a day-to-day basis or cover companies they hold stock in. For example, the reporter who covers the chemical beat should not own Du Pont Co. stock and the banking reporter should not own MBNA securities.

Staffers should not use unpublished information gained through The News Journal to buy or sell stocks. Nor should you write stories to manipulate the value of a stock.

Don't form business relationships with a news source – such as helping a source write a book or investing in a business venture unless approved by the editor. Always disclose to the editor if you have a significant investment in a company or a financial relationship with a subject you are asked to write about.

Book contracts must be approved by the editor. Writing a book on someone you have covered may jeopardize your ability to cover that story in the future.

Personal Relationships

Editorial employees should not let personal relationships cloud their news judgment. Don't work on stories that involve family members or close personal friends. Don't participate in coverage of an institution or business in which a family member holds a major position. For example, a reporter whose mother is on the board of trustees of the University of Delaware should not cover higher education. An editor should not edit stories or make decision about coverage if a family member holds an important post with a company or organization. An editor whose wife works for a public relations firm, for example, should not push stories coming from her company.

Dealing with Sources

It is important to cultivate sources. It is also important to maintain a certain detachment. Remember that your first loyalty is to The News Journal, even when what you do may be uncomfortable for a source. Be careful not to share too much information with sources.

Using Your Influence

Never use your position with the newspaper to gain a personal advantage, solicit trips or special press rates. Don't use your position as a reporter, photographer or editor to intimidate people, such as in a disagreement with a store or bank. Don't pass out your company business cards for personal purposes.

Favors and Gifts

We do not accept special favors, complimentary service or access, cash or gratuities from news sources. Gratuities include food, liquor, flowers, free rooms, sample merchandise or promotional merchandise. Do not accept door prizes or raffles at events you cover.

Larger gifts should be returned to the giver with a polite note explaining the newspaper's policies. When that is impractical, the gift should be donated for auction with proceeds to go to the Needy Family Fund

and a note explaining this to the giver. When it is impractical or impolite to pay for a meal, such as large group dinner, make arrangements to pay later. With news sources, insist on picking up the tab. Most people who send gifts or offer to buy lunch do so innocently. Care should be taken not to embarrass the giver by appearing critical or self-righteous when declining the present.

Sports reporters should not avail themselves of free food in the press box at events, unless prior arrangements have been made with the sports editor to pay the venue for the food. We have paid the venue at most events we cover regularly. If there is a question, ask the sports editor.

Travel

No editorial employee may accept free trips, reduced-fares or accommodations only available to the press. If the story is worth covering, the company will pay. We do not take inaugural flights or maiden voyages if the airline or cruise firms will not accept payment.

When free travel is the only way to cover the news (alternative travel arrangements having been exhausted), the executive editor must approve the arrangements.

The executive editor must approve travel on military airplanes.

Tickets

Do not accept free admission to an event that is not free to the public, unless you are covering the event as news. Reviewers should pay for tickets. The company will pay its own way. Invitations to press parties or tickets made available to the press may be accepted and used only by those assigned to cover the event. Employees with press passes should use them only when they are assigned to cover the event. They should never be loaned or used improperly in any way. Only working press are permitted in press boxes and press areas.

Review Copies

Books, CDs, DVDs, tapes, software and any other such source not listed here that are sent to The News Journal are the company's property. Those things not reviewed or kept for reference will be given to charity or sold to employees with the proceeds given to charities.

Gambling

With the exception of small office pools on which no one makes a profit, news employees should not gamble while working. This includes betting on slots at Delaware Park or Dover Downs.

Don't make wagers with news sources.

Contests and Awards

Staff members may not enter articles, photographs or graphics published in The News Journal in contests sponsored by special interest groups. For example, the county reporter should not enter coverage of county government in the Tom Gordon Journalism Contest. The reason for that is to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest.

If you find a contest you would like to enter, alert your supervisor. If it is a bona fide contest, the paper will enter your work.

Awards from controversial or special-interest groups must be declined. Neither should you seek such awards, since these groups attempt to influence coverage through prizes. Acceptance of such an award could compromise the newspaper in the eyes of the public. Any questions can be directed to the public editor.

Representing The News Journal

Remember that your behavior reflects on the newspaper. For that reason and because it is the civilized thing to do, we should be polite with each other and the public. Among things to consider are:

- Answer e-mail and return phone messages promptly.
- Be pleasant in dealing with others.
- Language that would be considered offensive to others should not be used in person, on the phone or in written or e-mail communications.

Internet Behavior

The Internet gives us a forum for research and interaction with others. Because our readers judge us by what we do, the same rules of civility and ethics apply there as in face-to-face encounters. If you have a home page, remember that your name is known as a member of The News Journal staff. Be sure the content of the page and the links on it are appropriate to your position in the community. Of course, using the Internet to view or download pornography is strictly prohibited.

We will not use the Internet to gather information surreptitiously. You are expected to identify yourself as a reporter if you enter a chat room or subscribe to a mail list for the purpose of gathering information for a story. It is permissible to monitor chat rooms or be on mail lists without identifying yourself if you are simply reading to gather background information, to track trends, to look for story ideas or to keep up with developments on your beat, to name a few examples. Even in those instances, though, you should identify yourself as a reporter any time you post a comment or question. You should never misrepresent yourself on the Internet.

Speaking Engagements

We encourage you to accept invitations to speak with civic groups and schools. You may not accept speaker's fees or honoraria from organizations or any special-interest group. You may be able to accept a fee from a professional journalism organization. Check with your supervisor before committing yourself.

Public Statements

- Take care not to publicly criticize the people or policies in organizations, institutions or agencies in your area of coverage since it can be perceived as bias.
- Refrain from criticizing other reporters or the newspaper's policies in public lest you be drawn into a controversy.
- Do not share information about stories or newsgathering operations with outsiders. Be especially careful not to share unpublished information with outsiders.
- Respect the privacy of your colleagues' computer files.
- Remember that electronic communication – like print – can easily be disseminated beyond your intended audience and take care, accordingly.
- Do not share information with official agencies without clearing it with a supervisor.