

2025 Poynter Journalism Prize winners and finalists announced

10 prizes honor best in U.S. journalism from 2024

The logo for The Poynter Journalism Prizes is displayed on a black rectangular background. The text "The Poynter Journalism Prizes" is written in a white, serif font, centered and stacked in four lines. Below the text is a solid green horizontal bar.

The Poynter Journalism Prizes

By: [Jennifer Orsi](#)

April 29, 2025

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (April 29, 2025) – The Poynter Institute is pleased to announce the distinguished winners and finalists of the 2025 Poynter Journalism Prizes, which spotlight a wide range of outstanding reporting and writing from U.S. news organizations during 2024.

The 10 winners and 19 finalists represent digital news sites, nonprofit news organizations, newspapers, podcasts, broadcasts and a TikTok video.

Neil Brown, president of Poynter and the chair of the 14-member Selection Board for the prizes, said the judges had a good problem: very difficult choices among a range of excellent work.

“The depth of reporting was striking, reinforcing that good source work combined with good storytelling can improve communities,” he said, adding that the board was “struck by some substantial partnerships and the power that those alliances can bring in getting more journalism out to more audiences — and making a difference.”

Some news organizations or journalists made multiple appearances among the winners and finalists. The Washington Post, which won the Dori Maynard Justice Award, also had finalists in three other categories. ProPublica won the Batten Medal and was a finalist for the Deborah Howell Award for Writing Excellence, and journalist Lizzie Presser was part of both entries. It was the second year for the contest’s newest award, the Roy Peter Clark Prize for Excellence in Short Writing, which this year went to S.P. Sullivan of NJ Advance Media for the writing of a TikTok video story on whether a mall was avoiding taxes.

About 40 journalists served on 10 category juries to nominate finalists for the prizes, and a 14-member Selection Board met earlier in April to choose the winners. All prizes come with a \$2,500 cash award, except the First Amendment Award, whose prize is \$1,000.

The 2025 winners and finalists are:

The Batten Medal

The Batten Medal, which recognizes exceptional journalism that makes a difference to the lives of people and their communities. The award is sponsored by editors from the former Knight Ridder.

Winner: Kavitha Surana, Cassandra Jaramillo and Lizzie Presser of ProPublica, [Life of the Mother](#)

Judges' citation: ProPublica's investigative series exposes the devastating consequences of restrictive abortion laws, revealing for the first time the stories of women whose deaths could have been prevented. Because of this reporting, Amber Thurman and Candi Miller's names echoed nationally as voters were considering abortion laws in several states, sparking crucial conversations on reproductive rights. "Life of the Mother" involved rigorous reporting, meticulous research, compelling storytelling and a deep commitment to public service. The impact of this work was broad and powerful: It proved, for the first time, how these laws have contributed to the deaths of multiple women in multiple states, in a variety of circumstances. Legislatures in at least seven states are this year considering expanded abortion access, with some of those proposed bills filed in direct response to ProPublica's reporting.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.propublica.org/article/georgia-abortion-ban-amber-thurman-death>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/porsha-ngumezi-miscarriage-death-texas-abortion-ban>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/nevaeh-crain-death-texas-abortion-ban-emptala>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/josseli-barnica-death-miscarriage-texas-abortion-ban>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/candi-miller-abortion-ban-death-georgia>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/abortion-bans-deaths-state-maternal-mortality-committees>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/abortion-ban-deaths-cdc-maternal-health-care>

- <https://www.propublica.org/article/miscarriage-abortion-bans-dilation-and-curettage-dilation-and-evacuation>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/abortion-doctor-decisions-hospital-committee>

Finalists: Qadri Inzamam and Megha Rajagopalan of The Fuller Project/The New York Times, [The Brutality of Sugar](#); and Staff, The Washington Post, [Abused by the Badge](#)

The Frank A. Blethen Award for Local Accountability Reporting

The Frank A. Blethen Award for Local Accountability Reporting, which recognizes outstanding work done by a news organization that holds local authorities accountable for actions (or inaction). Sponsored by The Seattle Times.

Winner: Alissa Zhu, Jessica Gallagher, Nick Thieme of The Baltimore Banner, working with the New York Times Local Reporting Fellowship, [Baltimore's Overdose Crisis](#).

Judges' citation: The Baltimore Banner embarked on a remarkable story that documented how nearly 6,000 lives had been lost to drug overdoses of fentanyl over a period of six years. The effort involved two years of reporting and expensive legal fights. Reporters found the rate of death nearly double that of any other large city. The deep-dive and strong narrative storytelling was exemplary and offered readers an example of very powerful journalism. Judges also applauded the sharing of the “one-of-a-kind dataset” with nine other media outlets.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/public-health/baltimore-opioid-overdose-capital-ZWBYWMCJ45CGNPCGAMFOE6YDGI/>
- <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/public-health/baltimore-opioid-drug-treatment-investigation-AOTRDIBQAJGHFFCLJ3NW2J5JN4/>
- <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/public-health/baltimore-overdose-deaths-black-men-6C4CEZLIZVAYPAEU3PUSBDXMDE/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/upshot/black-men-overdose-deaths.html>
- <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/politics-power/local-government/opioid-deaths-city-hall-silence-N5DCUPZELRCUBHD3WEV4JVT2HU/>
- <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/data/baltimore-overdose-epidemic-map-7FSHJD7RW5DRXG7BAKARODKMC4/>
- <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/public-health/baltimore-opioid-treatment-EU2FVOPI2RCMPPSF4MCQ6AYUVA/>

Finalists: Staff, KHOU-TV, [Struck: Inside the Harris County Jail](#); A.J. Lagoe, Steve Eckert, Gary Knox, KARE Investigates. KARE 11, [Recovery, Inc.](#)

The Deborah Howell Award for Writing Excellence

The Deborah Howell Award for Writing Excellence, which recognizes distinguished achievement in writing in any medium. Sponsored by Advance Publications.

Winner: Sarah A. Topol, freelance writer, [The Deserter](#), published in the New York Times Magazine.

Judges' citation: Stories about the experience of Russian soldiers are so rare, and this immersive, novelistic tale

sweeps us along in a love story and a survival story that also teaches us about Russian culture and its military. It is extensively reported and bravely and confidently told. It dares to offer an unconventional reading experience that rewards readers richly for the investment of their time.

Finalists: Sarah Zhang, The Atlantic, [After the Miracle](#); Lizzie Presser, ProPublica, [Maylia and Jack: A Story of Teens and Fentanyl](#)

The Dori J. Maynard Justice Award

The Dori J. Maynard Justice Award, which recognizes reporting that shines a light on ignorance, stereotypes, intolerance, racism, hate, negligence, inequality and systemic obstacles. Sponsored by The O'Brien Fellowship in Public Service Journalism, Marquette University.

Winner: Dana Hedgpeth, Sari Horwitz and Staff, The Washington Post, [Indian Boarding Schools](#).

Judges' citation: The Selection Board had high praise for this work, citing it among the contest's best. This 18-month investigation gives the fullest public accounting of the impact of the U.S. government's boarding school program, including extensive reporting on rampant abuse by Catholic priests, sisters and others in charge of Indian children. The judges called it a series that stays with you forever – haunting, beautifully done, searing, probing, important, with stunning findings and writing.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2024/sexual-abuse-native-american-boarding-schools/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2024/american-indian-boarding-schools-history-legacy/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2024/native-american-deaths-burial-sites-boarding-schools/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2024/10/25/biden-apology-indian-boarding-schools/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2024/06/14/catholic-church-indian-boarding-schools/>

Finalists: Staff, The Washington Post, [Abused by the Badge](#); Staff, USA TODAY, [Untested: America’s rape kit backlog was a national scandal. A decade later, problems persist.](#)

The First Amendment Award

The First Amendment Award, given to the best example of protecting or advancing freedom of information principles, and/or overcoming significant resistance to the application of the First Amendment.

Winner: In the Dark Podcast, Season 3, Staff, The New Yorker, [The Killings in Haditha](#)

Judges’ citation: An extraordinary effort with exceptional storytelling. The reporting team worked for years — filing more than 700 FOIA requests and six lawsuits — to tell this story, which also included locating and interviewing 39 U.S. Marines who were involved in the event being described, many of whom had never been interviewed.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/in-the-dark/season-3-episode-1-the-green-grass>

- <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/in-the-dark/season-3-episode-2-i-have-questions>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/in-the-dark/season-3-episode-3-sounds-like-murder>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/in-the-dark/the-war-crimes-that-the-military-buried>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/in-the-dark/the-haditha-massacre-photos-that-the-military-didnt-want-the-world-to-see>

Finalists: Katey Rusch, Casey Smith, San Francisco Chronicle, [Right to Remain Secret](#); Zach Despart, Yuriko Schumacher and Uriel J. García, The Texas Tribune, [Texas' Fragmented, Remote Border Wall](#)

The Burl Osborne Editorial and Opinion Award

The Burl Osborne Editorial and Opinion Award, which recognizes excellence in editorial writing that has made an impact on behalf of a community, resulting in change for the better. Sponsored by The Dallas Morning News.

Winner: The Philadelphia Inquirer, [The Trump Threat](#)

Judges' citation: While many major newspapers hesitated to take a stand in the 2024 presidential election, the Inquirer upheld its watchdog role with unwavering focus. Across more than 40 editorials, the board combined rigorous reporting with moral clarity to examine Donald Trump's record, character and ambitions. Though it didn't change the election's outcome, this work demonstrated that principled journalism can cut through corporate caution and speak truth to power.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/inq2/trump-threat-clear-present-danger-democracy-2024-elections-20240114.html>
- <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/inq2/trump-threat-russia-putin-ukraine-national-security-20240218.html>
- <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/inq2/people-who-know-trump-best-have-spoken-he-is-unfit-lead-editorial-20240331.html>
- <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/first-presidential-debate-joe-biden-donald-trump-withdraw-20240629.html>
- <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/a/endorsement-president-kamala-harris-democracy-20241025.html>

Finalists: The Boston Globe, [Boston's New School Crisis: Falling Enrollment](#); The Virgin Islands Daily News, [Can the Water and Power Authority Be Saved?](#)

The Mike Royko Award for Commentary and Column Writing

The Mike Royko Award for Commentary and Column Writing, which recognizes excellence in writing by an individual expressing a personal point of view. Sponsored by the Chicago Tribune.

Winner: Steve Lopez, Los Angeles Times, [Columns by Steve Lopez](#)

Judges' citation: Steve Lopez's work illustrates how a metro columnist can make a difference and force elected officials to pay attention to an issue in plain sight but long ignored. His work includes spectacular reporting and writing with a mix of perspective, empathy and outrage.

It's powerful work in the name of a good old-fashioned cause — a neighborhood and its people.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-08-24/column-langers-deli-owner-is-starving-for-city-to-clean-up-macarthur-park-and-thinking-of-closing>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-10-12/column-at-lafd-station-11-one-of-the-busiest-in-the-nation-few-fires-and-no-end-to-overdose-emergencies>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-10-26/column-surrounded-by-violence-drug-sales-and-overdoses-yoshinoya-staff-hangs-on-in-macarthur-park>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-12-19/i-cant-deal-with-life-sober-response-to-the-macarthur-park-drug-epidemic-just-isnt-enough>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-12-21/macarthur-park-needs-a-champion-and-defender-right-now>

Finalists: Gustavo Arellano, Los Angeles Times, [The 'Latino Vote' is a Myth](#); Will Bunch, The Philadelphia Inquirer, [A Selection of Columns by Will Bunch](#)

The Punch Sulzberger Prize for Journalism Innovation

The Punch Sulzberger Prize for Journalism Innovation, which is given for work that exemplifies new ways of executing the craft of journalism that will engage audiences and expand the work's impact and reach. Sponsored by The New York Times.

Winner: Julie Watts, Ryan Sabalow, Foaad Khosmood, CalMatters and CBS News California Investigates, [California's Fentanyl Fight](#).

Judges' Citation: Judges cited the team's work with the groundbreaking Digital Democracy database built by CalMatters, which used artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to further empower watchdog journalism and fill the reporting void left in statehouses across the country. The database collected information on millions of votes and hundreds of hours of hearings, allowing reporters to reveal hidden practices of California's Democratic supermajority legislature. "You read these pieces and you feel smarter and better-equipped to execute your rights in a democracy," one judge said.

Full winning entry:

- <https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/californias-fentanyl-fight-politicians-versus-parents/>
- <https://calmatters.org/digital-democracy/2024/04/california-democrats-no-votes/>
- <https://calmatters.org/politics/2024/05/california-lawmakers-voting/>
- <https://calmatters.org/politics/2024/10/fong-california-legislative-voting-assembly/>
- <https://calmatters.org/politics/2024/12/failed-bills-california/>
- <https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/tag/digital-democracy/>
- <https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/>

Finalists: Patricia Clarembaux, Federica Narancio and Esther Poveda, Univision Noticias Digital, [Exposed: Latino Farmworkers Risk their Health Working Under Threat of Pesticide Exposure](#); Prison Journalism Project

and The Marshall Project, [MadLib Journalism](#) to Shed Light on How Excessive Summer Heat Was Experienced in U.S. Prisons

The Robert G. McGruder Diversity Award

The Robert G. McGruder Diversity Award, for the accomplishments of media professionals who encourage diversity in hiring and coverage. Sponsored by McClatchy Media.

Winner: [Capital B](#)

Judges' citation: The journalists who started this newsroom in 2022 understood that the racial justice movement inspired by George Floyd's murder would inevitably face setbacks and retrenchment. They knew the traditional role of the Black press, telling stories that would otherwise go unreported. And they rose up to meet this moment. They are delivering stories around subjects like maternal health and Black farmers, and they are righting wrongs, exposing an Atlanta housing development's horrible disrepair. They have done an impressive amount of work in a short period of time, and they've managed to represent the diversity of the Black experience.

The Roy Peter Clark Prize for Excellence in Short Writing

The Roy Peter Clark Prize for Excellence in Short Writing for compelling journalistic writing of less than 800 words in any medium. Sponsored by the Poynter Institute.

Winner: S.P. Sullivan, NJ Advance Media, [Is the American Dream Mall ‘Open?’ An Investigation.](#)

Judges’ citation: An investigative reporter goes shopping for jeans at a giant, controversial mall. Years of questionable legal and tax behavior is presented in just 350 words and 90 seconds of Tik Tok quality video. Is the mall legally open? Or not? Is this the future of news telling for an audience we want to reach? Great use of text over video.

Finalists: Shawn McCreesh, The New York Times, [Campaign Notebooks](#); Talya Zax, The Forward, [Critical Arts Reviews](#); Washington Post, [Capital Letters](#)

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