

# NFPW

## E-Letter

March 2022

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### President's Message

This month, I'm turning the President's Message over to Kathryn Foxhall, vice chair of the [Society of Professional Journalists Freedom of Information Committee](#), who wrote this column for Sunshine Week.

I know this year's Sunshine Week has passed, but I think Foxhall's message is still timely, and many thanks to Gwen Larson for passing it along.

Foxhall wrote:

Last year, 25 groups [wrote to President Joe Biden's administration](#) saying journalists' jobs are intentionally hindered by the government in many ways. These include, as we wrote, "barring government scientists, issue specialists and other government employees from communicating directly with reporters and even refusing to allow interviews of such scientists or specialists, even with oversight by a public information officer." Addressed to the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy, the letter was signed on by groups including the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Newspaper Association, the Society for Environmental Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists. *(With the board's approval, NFPW also signed on to the letter.)*

The issue is far from new, of course. Over the past three decades the forced monitoring and blocking of journalists has become tighter and tighter. Some journalists say one presidential administration learns from the last and then builds the controls stronger.



### President's Message

foundational to the restrictions is the message that agencies or offices give to the employees — written or otherwise — that they may never speak to a journalist without monitoring from the bosses, often through public information offices.

This means that when a reporter contacts a staff member at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Food and Drug Administration, that person will usually tell the reporter they have to go through the PIOs. From there, officials decide behind closed doors whether there will be an answer at all, who can speak and what can be said.

A [comprehensive analysis](#) from the Brechner Center for Freedom of Information found that existing controls are unconstitutional violations of the First Amendment.

Last spring the Washington, D.C., chapter of SPJ [wrote to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky](#), saying the “restrictions on staff speaking to reporters without notifying authorities amount to a human rights abuse, withholding critical perspective from the public and from health professionals.”

Walensky responded, “CDC scientists and researchers communicate with members of the press about their work. However, CDC experts are working scientists and are not always available for interviews. Our press officers serve as points of contact for news media to provide relevant background information and to ensure questions are answered in a timely manner.”

With reporters’ access pretty well controlled through that choke point, leaders can also make briefings few and far between, without fear reporters will get around them.

Journalists get stories, of course. Sometimes we take what officials hand to us or interviews they allow under monitors. Sometimes we fill an article out with comments from outside sources. Sometimes insiders defy the rules and talk to us without reporting to the authorities.

However, with up to several thousand people in an institution prohibited to speak, or prohibited to speak without minders, it’s impossible that we know enough about issues critical to the public.

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, The New York Times [reported](#) that CDC was not releasing all the data it has on COVID. Perhaps reporters should have been in the buildings getting to know staff people, chatting with them normally.

Meanwhile, the controls have become somewhat of a societal norm. Many government entities on the federal, state and local level, businesses and nonprofit organizations put the no-talking-to-the-press rules on employees. There are many reasons these controls have happened, including reporters rushing to get a story; journalists believing what they get is the story, rather than a limited piece of the overall context; and officials legitimately fearing something will blow up on them, sometimes before they know about it themselves.

However, there is also a great deal of manipulation of information to serve political or other purposes.

As Russia is so profusely illustrating for us, information control by people in power is not just wrong, it’s one of the most corrosive and deadly forces in human existence.

In January, the Office of Science and Technology Policy published the [scientific integrity report](#) for the Biden administration, which basically endorsed press control policies as they have existed for years.

Freedom of information officers from SPJ and SEJ [wrote to the OSTP](#), saying the gatekeeping process “has slowed and effectively constricted the flow of information to journalists. The public is instead often fed a steady diet of curated information and official ‘talking points’ designed to support the agency’s position.”

Seven months after the original letter, and with the exception of acknowledgement emails, OSTP has not answered any of the groups’ correspondence.

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Foxhall offers a lot of food for thought. The purposeful and systematic blocking of access to government officials knowledgeable about events and issues important to the country should raise alarms that resonate with all of us. The disservice to the public is immeasurable. Sunshine Week’s motto has never been more apropos than now: Open government is good government.

Karen Rowley,  
NFPW President

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# NFPW 85th Annual Conference



The North Dakota Professional Communicators are hard at work coordinating the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual National Federation of Press Women Conference scheduled for June 23-25, 2022, in Fargo, N.D. This year's conference theme is "Be Bold. Be Brave. Be Legendary. Discover the Possibilities of the New Communications World."

## 2022 Schedule

In addition to the much-anticipated awards ceremony and banquet where the Communicator of Achievement will be announced, this year's conference will feature opportunities to try North Dakota foods and explore the Peace Garden State. The 2022 schedule includes three panel discussions focused on turning passionate pursuits into a profession, the complex relationship between the media and diverse communities, as well as podcasting tips and tricks.

If you are interested in selling your literature at the conference, please contact conference co-chair [Sadie Rudolph](#) to request a table on Author Alley. The 2022 NFPW conference speakers are bold, brave, and legendary! You can view the full conference schedule [here](#).

Pre and Post Tour Information and Registration is available. Please click on the button below to explore those itineraries:

[Tour Information](#)

## Conference Speakers

**Nicole Phillips** is a newspaper columnist, podcaster, and speaker. She will share "Kindness is Contagious in the Workplace" during the keynote address. In her presentation, Phillips will explain the research-based chain reaction that happens within our bodies when we lead with kindness. She will also explore an interactive and practical set of micro-actions anyone can do to foster kinder communication and bring out the best in each employee. These tips will have an immediate impact on your entire organization's culture. Hearing Phillips share how to say no to the negative and yes to kindness will leave you feeling uplifted, refreshed, and equipped to better enjoy your life both personally and professionally.

Journalist and author **Christopher Ingraham** will share the lessons he learned after leaving an established newsroom to start an independent newsletter in his presentation, "Leaving the Newsroom for the Newsletter." He publishes The Why Axis, a Substack newsletter covering all things data. Ingraham previously worked as a reporter for the Washington Post, and at the Brookings Institution and Pew Research Center. Ingraham authored the book *If You Lived Here You'd Be Home By Now: Why We Traded the Commuting Life for a Little House on the Prairie*, chronicling his family's move from the Baltimore/DC metro area to live in Red Lake County, Minn.

**Michelle Olson** will present "Communicating Inclusivity with Intent." She currently serves on the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Board as the Immediate Past Chair and is the CEO of Lambert, a full-service communications firm with offices in Michigan, New York, and Arizona. Olson has served clients across the U.S. and internationally and has significant

experience in corporate communications and issues management across industries including healthcare, land use, hospitality, and sustainability. She routinely integrates content marketing, social media, brand journalism, and other online initiatives into public relations strategies, reaching audiences efficiently and quickly to impact change.

**Andrea Mokros** has spent a career in communications and event production at the local, state, and national level. She will present "[Building the Bold North.](#)" Mokros, who served as Vice President of Communications for the 2018 Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee, will share how her team used the world stage to turn Minnesota's biggest liability — the cold— into its boldest asset, and leveraged the opportunity to tell a new story about the North. Mokros also has served in the White House as Special Assistant to President Barack Obama and Director of Strategic Planning for First Lady Michelle Obama. Prior to joining the White House, she served as Deputy Chief of Staff in the office of Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton; Deputy Chief of Staff to U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (Minn.); and as Director of the Executive Offices at the Washington, D.C., offices of Kissinger McLarty Associates. Currently, Mokros is Executive Vice President and Chief Public Affairs Officer at Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis.

Author, podcaster, and consultant **Patrick Kirby** will present "Treating Your Customers the Way Nonprofits Treat Their Donors." Using nearly 20 years of experience in nonprofit fundraising work, Kirby will share some of the best practices that nonprofits use to make transactional gifts and turn them into transformative relationships. Attendees can use this information – and how your business can get into the business of celebration and appreciation to develop customer relations better than you ever have before.

### Registration Information

#### Registration & Travel Info

Attendees can register for the 2022 conference on the [NFPW website](#). Grants are available for NFPW members who have never attended the national conference. The [first timer grant application](#) can be filled out online. The deadline to apply for the grant is Friday April 22.

The [Radisson Blu Fargo](#) hotel will host this year's conference in downtown Fargo. The conference room rate is \$134 plus tax per night for single or double occupancy. Call the Radisson Blu at 701-232-7363 to make reservations. Be sure to request the NFPW group rate. Or reserve online through the link on the [NFPW conference page](#).

Fargo's [Hector International Airport](#) (FAR) is served by [Allegiant](#), [American](#), [Delta](#), [Frontier](#), and [United Airlines](#). The Radisson Blu offers a free shuttle from the airport to the hotel. Several car rental companies operate out of the airport and Interstates 29 and 94 intersect within Fargo. Lyft, Uber, and several taxi companies also serve the area.

The North Dakota Professional Communicators invite you "North of Normal" to Discover the Possibilities of a New Communications World at the 2022 NFPW Conference!

### Reserve Hotel Room

## Conference Program Ads

Are you looking for a way to honor the Communicator of Achievement (COA)

nominee from your state? Consider purchasing an ad in the 2022 NFPW Conference program book. The booklet will be part of the welcome package conference attendees receive at the 85<sup>th</sup> annual conference in Fargo, N.D. This is a great way to share a special message, market your business, or advertise your publications to NFPW members from across the country.

- Quarter page: \$75      Dimensions: 3.2" X 3.2"
- Half page: \$100      Dimensions: 6.5"w X 3.2"h
- Full page: \$150      Dimensions: 7" X 7"

The deadline to submit ads is **May 15, 2022**. Submit your print ready ad to [Heather.Syverson@ae2s.com](mailto:Heather.Syverson@ae2s.com). Payment can be sent to:

North Dakota Professional Communicators  
Attn: Ellen Crawford  
2001 Park Blvd  
Fargo, ND 58103

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## Affiliate News

### Alaska Professional Communicators

Scientist and author Suzanne Marcy will speak at the Thursday, April 7, APC meeting. Her presentation will focus on wilderness travel and animal behavior. The virtual meeting will begin at noon Alaska time, although attendees can join as early as 11:30 a.m. for some conversation and to troubleshoot connections. Get more details by emailing [sherrie@arctic.net](mailto:sherrie@arctic.net).

APC also is holding its annual fundraiser to benefit the APC Scholarship Fund. Participants are invited to bid on two round-trip tickets on Alaska Railroad to Seward, Alaska (valued at \$394). The winning bidder will be able to select the travel dates, and the minimum bid is \$100. Deadline for bids is 5 p.m. Alaska time, Wednesday, April 20. To bid, send an email or text to [sherrie@arctic.net](mailto:sherrie@arctic.net) or 907-903-4724.

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### Missouri Professional Communicators

Missouri Professional Communicators member Ruth E. Thaler-Carter of St. Louis has been chosen for the Brighton Schools Alumni Association/Brighton High School Alumni Hall of Fame for her work in and service to communications, her many years of keeping friends and classmates connected, and her support of philanthropic organizations. She and four other new "hall of famers" will be inducted at an event in her hometown of Rochester, N.Y., in June.

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### Nebraska Press Women

Are Nebraska's new nonprofit media outlets part of a new media mix or the first wave of the future of the newspaper industry? It's a question that will be discussed April 23 at the 2022 NPW Spring Conference, which will be at the Best Western Plus motel in York. "The Nonprofit News Movement Comes to Nebraska" workshop will feature Flatwater Free Press Executive Editor Matthew Wynn and Nebraska Examiner Editor-in-Chief Cate Folsom. The conference's afternoon program, "Keeping Editors Happy," will focus on editor-writer relationships. At the noon awards luncheon, NPW High School Contest winners in attendance will be introduced, three new members will be inducted into the Marian Andersen Nebraska Women Journalists Hall of Fame, and NPW Professional Journalism Contest winners will be announced. Registration fees

are: Full day, members, \$45; full day, non-members, \$55; and lunch only, \$25. The registration deadline is April 13 at [nebraskapresswomen.org](http://nebraskapresswomen.org), or by mail to NPW Treasurer Barb Batie, 43590 Road 761, Lexington, NE 68850. Include your name, address, phone number and email address, and make checks payable to Nebraska Press Women. For more information, contact Lori Potter at [potterspix@gmail.com](mailto:potterspix@gmail.com) or 308-234-5974.

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### **Virginia Professional Communicators**

VPC is planning a spring in-person luncheon event at the end of April to celebrate contest winners and network. Members also are invited to check out the profiles of new VPC members [Melissa Face](#) and [Devin Reese](#), written by Terry Haycock, first vice president for membership.

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### **Wichita Professional Communicators**

Landon Huslig will present "Wichita Life: The Digital Way" at WPC's meeting Wednesday, April 6. Huslig runs Wichita Life ICT, a digital media platform with the goal of amplifying Wichita. With this brand, Landon and his wife, Candace, run social media accounts, a podcast, a talk show and an email newsletter. But Wichita Life ICT isn't Landon's full-time job; by day he works as a pipeline engineer for Flint Hills Resources. Learn the Wichita Life ICT story and how a mechanical engineer cared so much for his community that he created an entire brand to spread good news about the city. The meeting will be at Larkspur Bistro & Bar from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Register through [Eventbrite](#). Advance tickets are \$20 for WPC members and \$25 for non-members; walk-ins are \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members; students are always \$10.

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## **First Amendment Network (FAN) News**

I ran across a couple of interesting public records cases recently that I thought I'd share.

One involves a citizen journalist. Here's the issue at hand in a challenge to Washington state's public records law.

The law requires state agencies to produce government records at the request of the public. However, it does not allow the public to have access to personal records of public employees such as photographs and birthdays. That information is only available to the news media.

Brian Green produces investigative journalism videos on his YouTube channel about local government and court cases in Pierce County. He requested some personal data as part of his reporting, and the request was denied. The Washington Supreme Court ruled that Green as an independent journalist could not qualify as news media.

The ruling has been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The second case comes out of Virginia and challenges restrictions placed on public access to electronic court records. Virginia lawyers who pay annual fees get instant electronic access to new court records, but members of the public must go in person to the courthouse to obtain the same records.

The Courthouse News Service asked for the same electronic access the lawyers have, but the request was denied. It then filed a lawsuit saying the

practice violated the First Amendment.

Marsha Shuler,  
FAN Co-Director

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## Grants Available for First-Time Attendees at National Conference

If you are an NFPW member who has never attended an annual national conference, you are encouraged to [apply](#) for a first-timer grant to attend the 2022 NFPW Conference in Fargo, North Dakota. The NFPW Education Fund offers grants to pay all or part of the registration fees for members attending their first national conference. Recipients must be a member of NFPW. Proceeds from the Silent Auction held at the conference each year, as well as donations, support the Ed Fund. **The application deadline is Friday, April 22, 2022.** Submission information is available on the [application form](#). For more information, please contact Education Fund Chair Gwen Larson at [gazettegl@yahoo.com](mailto:gazettegl@yahoo.com).

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## Send Your Information

We can't communicate what we don't know! Please send news about your affiliates and members for inclusion in the monthly E-Letters and in Agenda, which is published quarterly. Send items to [president@nfpw.org](mailto:president@nfpw.org). **The deadline for each E-Letter is the 15th of the month preceding.**

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## We Remember

[Carol E. Oukrop](#), 87, a longtime faculty member at Kansas State University and the first director of the A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications, died Feb. 5. A faculty member at three universities during her career, she was known for doing pioneering work on the status of women in journalism and mass communication education. Oukrop was the 1991 Kansas Professional Communicators Communicator of Achievement.

*Affiliates, please remember to notify NFPW historian Amy Geiszler-Jones, [algj64@sbcglobal.net](mailto:algj64@sbcglobal.net), of the deaths of affiliate/NFPW members so that NFPW may recognize those individuals in the organization's E-Letter, Agenda and annual memorial service. Deaths will be reported in the E-Letter and an extended obituary will appear in Agenda.*

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## Calendar

### Upcoming Events

- April 8, 2022 - National judging complete for Communications Contest
- April 22, 2022 - First Time Grant Application Due
- May 15, 2022 - Ad Deadline for Conference Program
- June 23-25, 2022 - NFPW Communications Conference ~ Fargo, ND

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Please go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and select NFPW Education Fund as your favorite charity and Amazon will donate .05% of the eligible purchases to NFPW Education Fund.

Go ahead and shop, shop, shop and help the Education Fund while you are shopping!!!

## NFPW Code of Ethics

As a professional communicator, I recognize my responsibility to the public which has placed its trust and confidence in my work, and will endeavor to do nothing to abuse this obligation.

With truth as my ultimate goal, I will adhere to the highest standards of professional communication, never consciously misleading reader, viewer, or listener; and will avoid any compromise of my objectivity or fairness.

Because I believe that professional communicators must be obligated only to the people's right to know, I affirm that freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of the citizens of a free society.

I pledge to use this freedom wisely and to uphold the right of communicators to express unpopular opinions as well as the right to agree with the majority.

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*"We draw strength, enrichment  
and friendship from one  
another."*

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