



March 2026

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President's Message

Sunshine Week, the annual recognition of the need for transparency and openness in federal, state, and local governments, kicked off Sunday. This year's observance is March 15-21.

As an organization of communicators who champion the First Amendment, NFPW has supported the annual event by sharing information and discussing the importance of access to information about government decisions and actions. The [website](#) for Sunshine Week, says it far more eloquently than I can: Sunshine Week occurs each year in mid-March, coinciding with James Madison's birthday, March 16 (1751). Madison was a driving force behind the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and presented the first version of the Bill of Rights to Congress. He was also the fourth president of the United States. Coordinated

by the nonpartisan **Joseph L. Brechner Freedom of Information Project** at the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, Sunshine Week helps educate the public, journalists, lawmakers, and others on the right to know in the U.S. states and the federal government.

In the 20 or so years that Sunshine Week has been recognized, the sense of urgency around these issues of access seems to be growing. In my state, we talk a lot about how open records and open meetings laws are not for journalists only; they are for all citizens who want information about how their government makes decisions and implements policies. Journalists may use open records laws to reveal cracks in the system, but the law and its access to public information are available to all. No press card is required.

If you are interested in championing Sunshine Week on your own social media channels, a [toolkit](#) is available on the Sunshine Week website. For those of you, who like me, appreciate the way editorial cartoonists can demonstrate ideas so succinctly and visually, [here's a link](#) to some resources that include editorial cartoons about the subject.

Sincerely,

Debbie

Debbie Miller
NFPW President

FAN News (First Amendment Network)

ON THE FEDERAL FRONT:

A federal court hearing in The New York Times lawsuit trying to overturn the Pentagon's new policy limiting journalists access and putting restrictions on how they work included an interesting comment from the presiding judge. "A lot of things need to be held tightly and securely, but openness and transparency allow members of the public to know what their government is doing," said U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman to journalists.

Another related development saw The Washington Post put a box on its website asking for information about "changes within the Pentagon and throughout the U.S. military." Defense officials called it "prohibited solicitation."

And there's more: the Pentagon banned press photographers over unflattering Pete Hegseth photos.

ON THE STATE FRONT:

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law a bill that provides tax credits to local newspapers.

Louisiana lawmakers are debating legislation that would shield from the public records dealing with searches for college and university leadership, as well as donors. Opponents labeled it a clear attack on transparency.

In Colorado, lawmakers struck down a third attempt to slow down public records response. "When government starts hiding or even appearing to hide, it's a bad thing for representative democracy," said state Sen. Katie Wallace.

The Indiana Capital Chronicle sued to get records on spending for drugs for state executions. After nearly a year, a court ruled in the paper's favor.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press has expanded its free legal support to local newsrooms.

Marsha Shuler & Angela Smith, FAN Co-chairs

Affiliate Leadership Symposium at the 2026 NFPW Communications Conference

NFPW is excited to announce a new opportunity for collaboration and leadership development at the 2026 NFPW Communications Conference: the first-ever Affiliate Leadership Symposium. Held in conjunction with the conference, the symposium will provide a dedicated space for affiliate presidents, officers, membership chairs, and emerging leaders to connect, exchange best practices, and learn from one another. The symposium will be held on **Thursday, September 24 from 2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City, MD.**

C. Linwood Jackson (Delaware) will share "Leadership at the Local Level: How Affiliates Shape the Future of Press Freedom." Angelita Faller (Arkansas) and Kay Stephens (Pennsylvania) will present "The Membership Playbook: What NFPW State Leaders Are Trying Now".

Via a "best practices idea board," symposium attendees will receive a compilation of a "what's tried and true" resource document. Through discussion and collaboration, participants will help shape the future of NFPW while building stronger, more vibrant affiliate organizations across the country.

Volunteers Needed: 2026 Communications Conference

The success of NFPW's conference depends on the energy and involvement of our members—and we need you! Volunteering is a meaningful way to strengthen our organization while expanding your own professional connections. We are especially seeking members who can help solicit sponsors and partners, as well as those willing to organize and facilitate engaging networking roundtables. These roles are vital to creating a dynamic, well-supported conference experience for everyone. If you're ready to share your talents, build relationships, and play a key role in making this year's conference a success, we would love to have you on the team. Email lisa@nfpw.org to express your interest.

Reserve Your Room: 2026 Communications Conference

It's not too early to reserve your room at the beautiful [Turf Valley Resort](#) - home to NFPW's 2026 Communications Conference!

Nestled on 1,000 scenic acres in central Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridor, the resort is surrounded by beautiful landscapes and offers a relaxing destination for our 2026 Communications Conference.

Turf Valley is 20 miles from Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Fort McHenry and the Baltimore Aquarium and less than 40 miles from the historic monuments and landmarks of Washington D.C., including the White House, National Zoo and Smithsonian Museums.

The resort's land was once home to a thriving thoroughbred farm, contributing to Maryland's rich equestrian history. Horse farms still surround Ellicott City, which boasts the historic Main

Street full of 18th- and 19th- century architecture, shops, restaurants and galleries.

The conference program is in the planning stages, but we invite you to reserve your room at the Turf Valley and take advantage of early-bird pricing. Click [here](#) to reserve your room and use code **28K790** to receive the NFPW discounted rate of \$155 (price varies based on room type). **Note:** for members wishing to come early/stay late for tours, the Turf Valley advises that you reserve your room by phone so that the group rate can be properly applied to your extended visit: call 888-833-8873 to reserve your room. Use code 28K790 to receive the NFPW discounted rate of \$155. **The group discount is available until August 24, 2026.**

For planning purposes, Turf Valley Resort is less than 30 minutes from Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) and 90 minutes from both Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) and Dulles International Airport (IAD).

Affiliate News

Alabama Media Professionals

AMP's News Literacy Committee is partnering with Hoover Public Library again this year to hold an event aimed at helping the public identify standards-based journalism as well as misinformation. The event will be held on March 18 at 6 p.m.

The group is planning an interactive program in which AMP members will guide participants in verifying the accuracy of content and spotting misinformation using News Literacy Project tools. Alee Quick, director of community engagement for The News Literacy Project, will introduce that organization, which is a world leader in promoting news-literacy awareness, and its free educational resources.

Alaska Professional Communicators

Alaska Professional Communicators will host an in-person and hybrid luncheon on Saturday, March 21, with a presentation titled "Challenges and Opportunities for Local News." Vicky Ho, editor of the Anchorage Daily News, will be the speaker.

The program starts at 11:45 a.m. at Glacier Brewhouse Banquet Room, 737 West 5th Ave., in Anchorage.

Vicky Ho is the editor of the Anchorage Daily News, where she is responsible for news content across all platforms as well as

newsroom strategy and management. She joined the ADN in 2015 after working as an editor at a daily newspaper in Colorado. She's previously worked as a coach in the Poynter Institute's Table Stakes program, helping local news organizations across the country transition to more sustainable digital publishing models. She is also a member of the board of the nonprofit Alaska Press Club.

There is a Zoom option for NFPW members who would like to tune in. For Zoom reservations, reserve/prepay directly at <https://akprocom.org/lunchpayment.html>. Select the Zoom option.

After you have paid to attend by Zoom, you will be sent the link. APC and NFPW members unable to attend in person will pay \$5. Nonmembers pay \$8.

Reservations are requested by Wednesday, March 18.

Colorado Press Women

Members and guests are invited to Zoom in on Wednesday, March 18, at 7 p.m. (Colorado is in the Mountain Time Zone), for "[Nicole Vap in Conversation with Laura Frank](#)," a Sunshine Week event about Nexstar's acquisition of Tegna and what that means for the Colorado and national media landscape and the information void it leaves. The pair will also discuss potential solutions, including MATCH Lab, a Colorado News Collaborative (COLab) initiative that "collaborates across media, academia and talent to help local newsrooms meet their toughest challenges and ensure every community has access to strong, trusted news."

Most recently, Vap was Executive Producer of Content Development for CBS News, where she led national investigative storytelling with correspondents, producers, data reporters, and photojournalists.

Frank is the executive director of COLab, a nonprofit with 180+ news partners. She was the 2025 University of Denver Wolzien Visiting Professor of the Practice and is a former investigative reporter, founding member and chair emerita of the Institute for Nonprofit News.

To access this free event, go to www.zoom.com and use **Meeting ID: 981 8550 5440 Passcode: 266843**

Please email info@coloradopresswomen.org for more information.

North Dakota Professional Communicators

NDPC will host its spring conference Thursday, April 30, at the Gorecki Alumni Center in Grand Forks.

Titled "Strong Communication, Strong Connections," the event will feature a variety of speakers discussing AI, how community insight shaped SW North Dakota's tourism strategy, and "Signal Over Noise: Creating Connection in the Age of Distrust." The event will also feature the spring awards and networking luncheon. More information is available at

<https://www.aboutndpc.org/2026conference>.

COA Nominations Are Open Now for NFPW's Highest Honor

Nominations for the 2026 NFPW Communicator of Achievement are open, and all nomination materials are due by **Monday, April 13, 2026**.

The award, NFPW's highest honor, is given to a member nominated by his or her state affiliate for achievement in the communications field and service to the affiliate, NFPW and the community.

Traditionally, each affiliate honors its nominee in its own way. All affiliate nominees for NFPW Communicator of Achievement are recognized individually, with the winner and runner-up announced at the COA Banquet during NFPW's annual conference, slated for September 24-26 at the Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City, Maryland.

Karen Stensrud of North Dakota, herself a past national COA, is again serving as NFPW's COA director. Stensrud stated that because the judging criteria balance professional accomplishments and service, "Any nominee has an excellent chance of being recognized as NFPW's national COA."

Nominees must be living members in good standing for at least two years in an affiliate and NFPW. To check on a member's status, email membership@nfpw.org. A previous nominee can be named by an affiliate again, as long as he or she has not been honored as NFPW's national COA winner.

Nomination packets must be emailed to [Karen Stensrud](#). The entry fee of \$60 covers COA expenses and corsages or boutonnieres provided by NFPW for the nominees to wear at the COA awards banquet. The fee can be paid electronically at by [requesting a digital invoice](#) or by check made out to NFPW and mailed to:

NFPW
140B Purcellville Gateway Dr., Suite 120
Purcellville, VA 20132

Payment of the fee must be made by April 13, 2026.

Continue to watch email and NFPW publications for information. Nominees will be judged in four areas:

- Professional achievement (50%)—All nominees should have high professional qualifications and achievements in their areas of communications (any field that has qualified the nominee for NFPW membership).
- Community service (20%)—Each nominee should have made some impact on the world beyond his or her profession—some contribution to humanity. That impact or contribution may be through the profession or beyond it.
- NFPW service (15%)—Since this is NFPW's highest award, each nominee should have been active in the national organization. This could include attendance at previous NFPW conferences, volunteering or giving presentations at NFPW conferences or other activities deemed by the judges to have been of service to NFPW.
- State affiliate service (15%)—Each nominee should have made a definite and important contribution to his or her affiliate, as the state affiliates are important for carrying out the mission of NFPW.

The complete nomination packet, including rules/judging, a nominee checklist, and the entry form can be found [online](#).

Member News

Kathryn Canavan covered two multiple murders that took place on the same day and during the same hours and only four miles apart in 1976. She went back to the streets where they happened 47 years later and re-interviewed detectives, attorneys, survivors, and neighbors she had first interviewed during the 10-day search for the killer. *Killer in the House*, published by Brookline Books on

February 15, is told through the eyes of a 25-year-old reporter for a suburban daily, a reporter who lives alone in a secluded cabin almost exactly halfway between the two murder sites.

Anne Hillerman, best-selling author of the *Leaphorn, Chee and Manuelito* mysteries, was kind enough to write this blurb for Canavan's book: "*Killer in the House* is true crime writing at its best. It made it hard for me to turn off the reading light and get to sleep."

Let's Get Social (Media)

NFPW is committed to leveraging our professional network to increase our outreach. And so we'll use [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) to attract more members, share the successes of our members, and provide information about the communications contest and conferences. We invite you to get social (media) with us!

Share 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. The deadline for each E-Letter is the 20th of the month preceding.

Mark Your Calendars

April 7, 2026 - Affiliate Presidents Zoom Meeting

If you are an affiliate president and need information on how to access the meeting, please email lisa@nfpw.org.

August 24, 2026 - Deadline

[Reserve your room](#) at the Turf Valley Resort to receive the discount rate of \$155.

Sept. 22 - Enjoy Ellicott City pre-conference tour (registration opening soon)

Sept. 23 - Baltimore: History, Harbor & Hidden Gems pre-conference tour (registration opening soon)

Sept. 23 - Pamper-Palooza pre-conference spa day (registration opening soon)

Sept. 24 - Pamper-Palooza pre-conference spa day (registration opening soon)

Sept. 24 - Affiliate Leadership Symposium (in conjunction with the NFPW 2026 Communications Conference, Ellicott City, Maryland)

Sept. 24-26, 2026—NFPW Conference, Ellicott City, Maryland

Sept. 27 - Seas the Day: Delaware Coast pre-conference tour (registration opening soon)

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.

NFPW

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