

**From:** Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 16, 2023 9:00 PM

**To:** 'stephen.engelberg@propublica.org'; 'Tracy.Weber@propublica.org';  
'Charles.Ornstein@propublica.org'; 'alexandra.zayas@propublica.org';  
'eric.umansky@propublica.org'; 'Jeremy.Kutner@propublica.org';  
'robin.sparkman@propublica.org'; 'dick.tofel@propublica.org';  
'robin.fields@propublica.org'; 'sklein@thecity.nyc'

**Cc:** 'sue@inn.org'

**Subject:** **Complaint vs ProPublica to INN for Violations of INN Membership Standards, the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, 501(c)(3) Proscriptions on Partisanship, & for Fraud**

**Attachments:** [6-16-23-complaint-to-inn.pdf](#)

**TO: ProPublica**

Editor-in-Chief Stephen Engelberg  
Managing Editor Tracy Weber  
Managing Editor-Local Charles Ornstein  
Deputy Managing Editor Alexandra Zayas  
Editor-at-Large Eric Umansky  
Jeremy Kutner, General Counsel  
President Robin Sparkman  
Former President Richard Tofel  
Former Managing Editor Robin Fields  
Former Deputy Managing Editor Scott Klein

Above-attached is my complaint against ProPublica to the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), transmitted to it by the below e-mail.

Please forward to your [Board of Directors and Journalism Advisory Board](#) – and, additionally, to former President Tofel, in the event his ProPublica e-mail address is no longer active.

I am available to answer questions – and look forward to your constructive response.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director  
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)  
[www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org)  
914-421-1200  
[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)

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**From:** Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)>

**Sent:** Friday, June 16, 2023 7:16 PM

**To:** 'sue@inn.org' <[sue@inn.org](mailto:sue@inn.org)>

**Cc:** 'info@inn.org' <[info@inn.org](mailto:info@inn.org)>

**Subject: Complaint vs INN Members for Violations of INN Membership Standards, the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, 501(c)(3) Proscriptions on Partisanship, & for Fraud -- plus 3 Requests for Assistance Based Thereon**

**TO: Institute for Nonprofit News Executive Director/CEO Sue Cross**

Thank you for your below e-mail, responding to mine, also below.

INN is responsible, professionally, civically, and legally, for ensuring compliance by its members with the standards to which it proclaims they adhere. As stated unequivocally on your [“Membership Standards” webpage](#):

“Newsrooms in the INN network uphold standards that represent a promise of editorial excellence, ethical behavior and transparency about their funding and practices...

The public can be assured that INN member news organizations have met...standards...”  
(underlining added).

After you have reviewed the above-attached complaint, I trust you will agree – and that you will present it to the [INN Standards Task Force](#), of which you are the liaison, and the [Board of Directors](#), so as to develop appropriate procedures for handling it.

As for my own communications with your ten complained-against member organizations – and with an eleventh, described in the complaint – they are unavailing. Your INN members do not respond to me and simply persist in their violative conduct.

Upon e-mailing the complaint to the eleven, which I will begin to do shortly, I will include you as a cc – and all the transmitting e-mails will be posted on the webpage I have created for this complaint on CJA’s website, [here](#). That is where I will also post their responses and yours, when received, consistent with the INN standard of “transparency”.

My complaint also presents three requests for assistance based thereon – and all three requests are in furtherance of INN’s goal of ensuring “access to trustworthy sources of news”, “holding the powerful accountable and strengthening democracy”.

I look forward to discussing all of the foregoing with you directly.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director  
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)

[www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org)  
914-421-1200  
[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)

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**From:** Sue Cross <[sue@inn.org](mailto:sue@inn.org)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 14, 2023 5:29 PM

**To:** Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)>

**Cc:** [info@inn.org](mailto:info@inn.org)

**Subject:** Re: Query: INN's procedures for complaints against its members for violations of INN standards & of 501(c)(3) proscriptions on partisanship

Hi Elena --

We do not have such a process and do not get involved in our members' editorial decisions; we are a support organization helping them build sustainability around their reporting.

I'd recommend you address your complaint and detail your concerns directly with the news outlet. If you believe the organization has fallen outside of the IRS guidelines on nonpartisanship, would include why you believe that is a concern in your communications with the news outlet. You're welcome to copy INN in. We would not likely get involved but we are of course interested in journalism standards.

Thanks,

Sue

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On Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 2:03 PM Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)> wrote:

**TO:** [Institute for NonProfit News \(INN\)](#)

This follows the voice mail message I left nearly 3 hours ago at 818-582-3560.

I have not found any information on your website about procedures for filing complaints against INN members for violations of [INN standards](#) and of 501(c)(3) proscriptions on partisanship. Are there posted procedures and if not, what are the procedures?

I have drafted a complaint, which I have addressed to Executive Director/CEO Sue Cross. Is there anyone else who should be cc'd?

Please advise.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director  
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)  
[www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org)  
914-421-1200  
[elena@judgewatch.org](mailto:elena@judgewatch.org)