**Guild Members Stand Up for ‘Right to Report’**

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embers of The NewsGuild-CWA are continuing to stand up for reporters and press freedom through the Right to Report project, even as President Trump amps up his attacks on both.

The president’s war on the media gained steam throughout the summer, beginning with his decision to retweet a 28-second video that depicted him beating up CNN and ending with him questioning journalists’ patriotism at a 2020 campaign rally in Phoenix.

“Trump’s attacks on journalists are straight out of the authoritarian playbook,” said NewsGuild-CWA President Bernie Lunzer. “His goal is to delegitimize the press; distort the truth; deny the American people access to information, and distract from news he doesn’t like.

“But we and the American people are going stand up for the Constitution and the public’s right to know.”

**Defending Our Integrity**

Delegates to a Guild conference in Pittsburgh in August discussed how journalists can refute accusations that they are “fake news.” Delegates said TNG members should, among other things, advocate for high standards and inform people about how journalists maintain integrity in their reporting.

“We should educate people about how we do our jobs; how newsrooms work; the difference between news and opinion,” said Sandra Tan, president of the Buffalo local.

“People don’t understand that for professional journalists there is a verification process. Stories go through fact-checks, through a copy desk. There are multiple sets of eyes on stories,” said Nolan Rosenkrans, president of the Toledo Local.

To verify information, reporters seek multiple sources; check various public records; file Freedom of Information requests; seek comment from sources with opposing views; check with multiple people to verify events and conversations; ask lots of questions; and hold themselves to high ethical standards.

**Make It a Felony**

Delegates to the conference also endorsed a resolution, Defend the Right to Report, which the Communications Workers of America convention adopted immediately after. NABET (National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians) joined the Guild in proposing the resolution to the CWA.

Speaking in favor of the resolution at the CWA convention, Rosenkrans said: “We are not the enemy of the people; we are the voice of the people. Our union fights not just for better pay, benefits and working conditions for our members at newspapers and websites in the U.S. and Canada. We fight for better, more ethical journalism.”

The resolution declares CWA’s support for national and state legislation that would make it a felony to assault journalists, including reporters, photographers and videographers.

It also says that journalists must be allowed to cover public events, report on protests, and question officials without fear of arrest or other forms of intimidation, and supports passage and enforcement of Freedom of Information laws at the federal, state and municipal levels.

**Tracking Abuse**

The Guild is also working with the Freedom of the Press Foundation, the Committee to Protect Journalists and many other media groups to promote the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, which is a repository of data about press freedom abuses. TNG will submit information to the tracker about arrests, assaults, and other forms of intimidation our members experience, and, when appropriate, refer our members and others to report infringements on press freedom to the *pressfreedomtracker.us* directly.

In September, about a month after it was set up, the tracker listed the following data for 2017: 20 arrests of journalists; 12 equipment seizures and searches; 19 physical attacks; and four border stops.

The Guild also supports efforts by the National Press Club Journalism Institute and the Media Law Resource Center to monitor day-to-day impediments facing journalists covering federal, state and local government. The Institute has created an online form that can be filled out any time a public official is muzzled, government data is denied, or other types of information that belong to the public are kept from the public. For more information, visit http://bit.ly/2xkNEuA.

**In Court**

TNG also signed two amicus briefs recently. One supports a challenge in the Fourth Circuit to North Carolina’s “ag gag” statute, which goes far beyond agriculture. The law allows an employer to pursue a civil complaint against a worker who enters a nonpublic area of the employer’s premises for a reason other than work and against anyone who places a surveillance device or unattended camera on the work premises.

The brief, filed by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP), says information and documentation provided to the press from such situations is essential to investigative journalism.

The other brief, filed by RCFP and signed by the Guild and 18 other organization, asks the Supreme Court to reverse a lower court ruling that permits law enforcement agencies to seize and search — without a warrant — cellphone records revealing the location and movements of a cellphone user over the course of 127 days.

A journalist’s cellphone location data “can disclose particularly sensitive details about the journalistic process: It can reveal the stories a journalist is working on before they are published, where a journalist went to gather information for those stories, and the identity of a journalist’s sources…Exposure of sources and journalistic methods can put sources’ jobs and lives at risk, compromise the integrity of the newsgathering process, and have a chilling effect on reporting,” the brief says.

“Journalists who ask tough questions are seeking truth on behalf of the people,” Lunzer said. “We will never give up.”

Cutlines:

At an August campaign rally in Phoenix, President Trump said of journalists, ‘And they’re bad people. And I really think they don’t like our country.’

Toledo Guild President Nolan Rosenkrans: ‘We are not the enemy of the people.’

In July, Trump retweeted a video that depicted him beating up CNN.