

# Jennifer Bertetto

PNA Board of Directors Chairman  
2023 Annual Dinner Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to be elected to be PNA's next chairwoman. The honor is especially humbling as we enter our 100th year of service to journalism across the Commonwealth.

The challenges which lie ahead are many. From public notices, to JCPA to sustainable business models to drive our industry forward well into the future; challenging dis and misinformation in an election year. These times are not for the faint of heart and now more than ever, our willingness to embrace change will be tested like never before.

We live in a time where the significance of a free press and unrestricted speech is more crucial than ever. It's not just a fundamental right but a cornerstone of democracy, essential for an informed, engaged, and empowered society. The press serves as the public's eyes and ears, uncovering truths, holding power to account, and allowing voices to be heard.

Throughout history, journalists have been the vanguards of truth, shining a light on corruption, injustice, and societal issues. They are the watchdogs, providing us with the information necessary to make informed decisions and to hold those in power accountable.

However, the very essence of a free press is constantly threatened. In recent times, we've seen rising concerns globally with the shrinking space for journalists and the silencing of dissenting voices. Attacks on journalists, censorship, and the spreading of misinformation pose a significant threat to the integrity and freedom of the press.

The press isn't just about delivering news; it's about ensuring a society where individuals can express their thoughts and opinions without fear of persecution. Free speech forms the bedrock of a free society, fostering a marketplace of ideas where debates, discussions, and diverse opinions can thrive. When we protect free speech, we allow for innovation, progress, and the growth of a more inclusive society.

It's not merely about protecting the rights of journalists; it's about safeguarding the right of every individual to express themselves. Whether it's through journalism, art, protest, or social media, the ability to speak freely is vital for progress and change.

Let's not forget that the press and free speech are inseparable. They reinforce each other, and the press's freedom is intrinsically linked to the broader liberties we cherish in society.

But it's not just about grand ideas; it's about the tangible impact on our daily lives. A free press and free speech allow us to make informed decisions about our health, our governance, our environment, and our rights. It fosters a culture where the truth matters, where opinions are debated, and where progress can be achieved.



However, the responsibility is not just on journalists or the media but on all of us. We need to be discerning purveyors of information, questioning, and seeking truth rather than simply accepting what is presented. We must stand against the censorship of ideas, support independent journalism, and demand accountability from those in power.

Protecting the press and ensuring free speech isn't just an ideal—it's a necessity. It's the lifeblood of a healthy, functioning society. It's our responsibility to safeguard these liberties for ourselves, for future generations, and for the betterment of society as a whole.

I look forward to taking this journey over the next year with each of you. Tonight, I challenge you to see the opportunities which lie before us as publishers and editors in this industry I am so proud to represent. May our best moments still lie ahead for both our companies and the industry we all hold so dear.

Thank you.