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Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press announces Local Legal Initiative launch in Pennsylvania

Local Legal Initiative will place lawyers in total of five states — Colorado, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Tennessee — to provide local news organizations with pro bono legal support

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press announced today that it will launch its Local Legal Initiative this year in Colorado, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Tennessee to provide pro bono legal support to local journalists and news outlets throughout the states pursuing enterprise and investigative journalism.

The Reporters Committee's expansion to provide direct legal services to more journalists at the local level follows a [\\$10 million investment from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation announced last year](#) as part of the foundation's pledge to double its commitment to strengthening local journalism.

"We are eager to expand our legal services to help more local journalists pursue stories that inform and strengthen their communities," said Bruce Brown, executive director of the Reporters Committee. "We are looking forward to working closely with our partners in each of these states to support thriving local journalism."

Through the Local Legal Initiative, the Reporters Committee will employ a lawyer in each state to help local media defend against legal threats and lawsuits, assist with public records and court access efforts, and provide pre-publication review and other legal services.

"It's not enough to have First Amendment protections on paper. Freedom of the press needs to be defended on the ground, where local journalists are doing the work of holding the powerful to account," said Alberto Ibarguen, Knight Foundation president. "This initiative will help protect communities' access to the strong local reporting that is vital in a democracy."

The five launch states were selected from more than 45 submissions that the Reporters Committee received from over 30 states, regions and territories nationwide as part of a proposal



process the organization conducted last year after the announcement of the Knight Foundation's investment.

"The enthusiasm and responses we received from across the country make clear that there is a significant need for pro bono legal assistance for local journalists nationwide," said Katie Townsend, legal director for the Reporters Committee. "At a time when important local reporting is routinely stymied, we stand ready to help journalists and news organizations overcome the legal roadblocks they too often face."

"The Reporters Committee has always supported journalists nationwide, and we are thrilled to take this new step of placing attorneys in various locations across the country where they can serve local journalists on the ground," said Stephen J. Adler, chair of the Reporters Committee. "Each of the launch states has demonstrated enormous enthusiasm for addressing reporters' legal challenges, and we believe this exciting initiative will make an important difference in driving high-impact enterprise and investigative reporting."

[Learn more about the Local Legal Initiative.](#)