



2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

IN THE HEADLINES FOR POWERFUL JOURNALISM ON THE FRONT LINES OF PRESS FREEDOM



ABOUT THE STUDENT PRESS LAW CENTER

WHO WE ARE

Since 1974, the Student Press Law Center has been the nation's only legal organization devoted exclusively to **promoting, supporting and defending the First Amendment and free press rights of student journalists** and the educators who work with them.

We envision a world where all student journalists are respected, know their rights and are protected by law to express themselves freely as full and essential members of a healthy democratic society.

WHAT WE DO

SPLC equips students with the legal knowledge, tools and confidence to report and publish **powerful journalism** about their schools and communities, and to undertake **persistent advocacy** for their First Amendment rights by:

- Providing free, one-on-one legal expertise and support through our **hotline, pre-publication review** and **Attorney Referral Network**
- Expanding students' understanding of their First Amendment and newsgathering rights with **training, guides** and **other resources**
- Organizing and advocating to expand press freedom through the **New Voices movement**, and ensuring those laws are followed
- Building a community of support and taking action for press freedom on **Student Press Freedom Day** and all year long

Whether student journalists are covering protests, investigating corruption, challenging censorship or finishing the yearbook, we're proud to tell them:

**Write the story.
We've got your back!**

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As of August 2024. Affiliations for identification only.

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Dear friends and supporters,

Organizations don't actively seek out milestones, but they come nonetheless to those who actively engage, evolve and persist. For the Student Press Law Center, 2023-2024 was a year of many milestones.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Jack Nelson, whose 1974 book "Captive Voices" became the seminal report about the state of high school journalism, understood the power of a student press liberated from threats of censorship. "Where a free, vigorous student press does exist, there is a healthy ferment of ideas and opinions, with no indication of disruption or negative side effects on the educational experience of the school," he wrote.

In its final chapter, the book — which had been commissioned by the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial — outlined recommendations for protecting the high school press, including the establishment of "a national center advocating First Amendment guarantees for youth journalists."

"The center should circulate information on rights of free expression, receive and refer complaints to local advocates, and generally make every effort to encourage a consciousness and use of those rights among youth journalists. In this capacity it should work with students, teachers, and advisers to support the efforts of each in behalf of First Amendment freedoms for youth journalism."

And so, 50 years ago, the Student Press Law Center was born.

As SPLC celebrates five decades of remarkable accomplishments, it's hard not to be frustrated by how much 2024 still looks like 1974 in many ways. In the past year, student journalists have faced arrests and harassment for their important coverage of protests on college campuses. Advisers have been removed or

suspended because of content — legal, newsworthy content — published by their students. And, of course, student journalists are not immune from a hostile media environment, as political forces increasingly limit access to public records, wage misinformation campaigns, and call for intimidation of those reporting the news.

In each circumstance, SPLC has been on the front lines advocating for students and their advisers, and with results. Our executive director, Gary Green, who joined the organization in April 2023, and the amazing SPLC staff actively worked with students and advisers to push back against administrative overreach. They shepherded Minnesota as the 18th state to legislatively protect student journalists and their advisers from censorship. And with generous support from the Knight Foundation, they are working alongside the Center for Community News to strengthen professional-academic partnerships in the local news ecosystem.

We know the work just gets harder from here. That's why we're also pleased to welcome our organization's new development director, hired in June, to ensure the organization has the resources and connections to respond to the looming crises — and opportunities — just around the bend.

Fifty years ago, our founders envisioned an organization that would, through education and advocacy, "encourage a consciousness" about the power of a free student press. They would be proud of the organization's many milestones, no doubt. But so, too, would they remind us that this critical work has no respite, no vacation, no finish line.

Kelly Furnas
Chair, Board of Directors



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends and supporters,

Earlier this year, when protests engulfed college campuses across the country in response to the Israel-Hamas war, student journalists were on the front lines as the first documenters of history.

History has shown us what a huge responsibility it can be to tell a story nobody else has access to. Imagine if Kent State photojournalism student John Filo had not stopped to take photos of 14-year-old Mary Ann Vecchio screaming over the dead body of 20-year-old Jeffrey Miller on May 4, 1970. Miller had died when the Ohio National Guard shot and killed four protesters and injured nine peacefully-protesting college students. Fifty years later, Filo's photo still stands as a turning point in the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War.

This spring was eerily similar as student journalists covered an international story unfolding on campuses from New Hampshire to California. When pro-Palestinian protesters took over historic buildings and camped out on campus greens demanding their universities divest from businesses profiting from the Israel-Hamas war, student journalists worked around the clock to keep the world informed of what was happening inside campus gates. Other journalists, including professional media, were prohibited. For their role in covering this historic story, student journalists were intimidated, assaulted, banned from their newsrooms and arrested. Yet, they kept covering the story, just as they have been taught to do. When they needed help, SPLC stepped in to pressure administrators to have charges dropped, expunge the students' records, correct the wrongs and stand by their commitment to uphold the First Amendment rights of their student journalists.

SPLC turns 50 this fall, and as we look back with five decades of perspective, student journalists face many of the same challenges and obstacles as they did in 1974. What has changed drastically, however, is the state of local news. With the proliferation of "ghost newspapers," the corporate and hedge fund conglomeration of newspaper companies, newspaper closings and spread of news deserts, student journalism is often the only remaining viable local news available. Many of those student newsrooms face the same economic pressures as professional media with dwindling budgets and "death by a thousand cuts" from administrations all too eager to let student media wither away, especially noisy and nosey student media that has the audacity to look where others are not and hold their campus officials, school board members, trustees and elected officials accountable.

As student journalists help to prop up a fragile and rapidly-changing local news ecosystem, they desperately need our help. They are producing sophisticated and consequential journalism. Esteemed university presidents have stepped down in the wake of student reporting. A venerated Division I college football coach was fired following a hazing investigation by a student newspaper. Student journalists are covering state legislatures as part of a growing network of statehouse reporting programs and will play an outsize role in covering a historic election this fall. All of this comes with the same legal threats of their professional counterparts — except their professional counterparts have lawyers. At SPLC, we are dedicated to making certain student journalists also have lawyers and have the support they need to do this critically important work.

Without student journalists, many of these stories never get told. Without them embedding on college campuses when riots break out, we might not ever know what "really" happened. Student journalists must be able to do their jobs without interference or intimidation, and we must continue to fight for them, no matter the cost. That is why we need your support. We are only able to do this work thanks to the generosity of our donors, funders, volunteers and partners. If you are a long-time supporter of SPLC's mission, THANK YOU. If you share our underlying goal of engaging and educating young people in civic affairs and democracy, please consider making a one-time or monthly donation or planned gift. If you know of people in your network or family who believe in empowering young people to use their voice for positive change, please introduce them to SPLC, so that they too might consider making a gift and supporting SPLC's mission. If you love SPLC, buy some swag from our store and share it with the world.

After 30 years of working in journalism and journalism education, I am beyond humbled and proud to lead this organization at such a pivotal time. Thank you to each and every one of you who helped get us here. I look forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary together and ensuring SPLC is here to protect the voice of student journalists for the next 50 years.

Gary Green
Executive Director



Defending a free press during historic protests

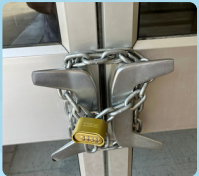
As protests related to the Israel– Hamas war spread in spring 2024 and the country's attention turned to college campuses, student journalists stepped up — again — as some of the best, most accurate sources of coverage. They also faced significant threats to their press freedom, whether it was from police, administrators or their fellow students.

SPLC mobilized quickly to offer support to student journalists, including writing multiple public and private letters challenging arrests or other discipline. We also brought together other press freedom groups to provide legal training and to defend their rights.



Student journalists assaulted, others arrested as protests on college campuses turn violent

DIRECT SUPPORT



When administrators locked a college radio station's staff out of their studio, **SPLC helped them regain access and resume broadcasting.**



Our Legal Hotline saw a **34% increase in requests for help** during April and May 2024, compared to 2023 — reflecting the protests and overall environment.

NATIONAL ADVOCACY



SPLC joined an **open letter to college administrators** calling on them to support student journalists. Our **separate statement** was cited by Poynter, CNN, Axios and others.

The Boston Globe

Facing national scrutiny, Dartmouth agrees student journalists 'should not have been arrested'

When two Dartmouth College student reporters were arrested and charged with trespass while covering a protest on their own campus, SPLC — alongside the Foundation for Individual Rights & Expression — **organized a coalition of 15 national groups to demand the charges be dropped.** Within hours of receiving our letter, the prosecutor declined to pursue those charges.

"I'm really happy to see that there have been all of these organizations that have stood behind us. What happened last week was really a clear threat to the free press. ... I'm more fired up than ever about being a journalist."

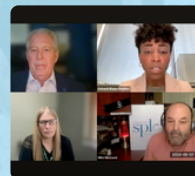
— CHARLOTTE HAMPTON

ARRESTED REPORTER FOR THE DARTMOUTH

LEGAL EDUCATION



In just one month, **more than 1,200 people reviewed our updated guide to covering protests.**



With our partners, we quickly conducted **legal trainings for 100+ people** and co-hosted a **discussion of students' challenges covering protests** with 1,000+ listeners.

THE SACRAMENTO BEE
C.K. McClatchy HS leaders mimic national trend
of undermining student press freedom | Opinion

Protecting student voices besieged by cultural battles

Student journalists are at the forefront of covering their schools and communities, which often puts them at the center of the biggest stories of the day. Throughout this year, they worked tirelessly to capture the views of their classmates in their reporting on pivotal current events, including the Israel-Hamas war, book bans, discussions of LGBTQ rights and more.

In many cases, the community pushback to coverage of sometimes controversial issues has been severe, aimed as much (or more) at the journalists and their advisers as to the opinions themselves. One person went so far as to write a high school journalist's chosen college to demand they rescind the student's offer because she reported on the Israel-Hamas war.

Situations like this made headlines throughout the school year in California (multiple times over), Illinois, New Jersey (again) and Texas, just to list a few, and these represent only a fraction of the censorship battles occurring across the country.

In these public cases, **not a single school district stood up for the student journalists and advisers doing their jobs**. Without the support of their administrators, SPLC remains the loudest advocate in the fight against censorship. In addition to providing direct support through our Legal Hotline, we've written strong public (and private) letters to administrators, and spoken to reporters about why it's important for student media to be free to report the news, especially on controversial issues.

California adviser reflects on the weight of these fights

After one California student newspaper published a story which stated classmates' perspectives on the Israel-Hamas war last fall, they received a number of critical comments from parents. "We had a diverse staff, and many of them were confronting this topic in a very personal way," their adviser said. "It's hard to put into words that stress; I was concerned I would lose my job and my housing for publishing this article — some student reporters had friendships that dissolved."

The adviser said their administration "would have happily sacrificed meaningful journalism and expression" to keep the peace, but we had their backs. "[SPLC] was the calm amidst the storm. Being able to receive advice from professionals who know and understand the field kept us from completely devolving... Instead, we were able to hold firm to our journalism ethics and principles, and it was an unforgettable experience my editors still refer to as uniquely significant to their identities as journalists."

"SPLC was an incredible resource. It was the calm amidst the storm. Being able to receive advice from professionals who know and understand the field kept us from completely devolving... Instead, we were able to hold firm to our journalism ethics and principles..."

— ADVISER ON HER STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE
FACING COMMUNITY BLOWBACK

Calls for censorship often come from vocal minority

SPLC illustrated this in an incident at Lyman High School in Longwood, Florida.

The Lyman yearbook was the target of a fiery community debate over two pages of LGBTQ content. It was unclear how many objectors at the four-hour board meeting were actually part of the Lyman community, but the school district caved, offering refunds or reprints of the yearbook without those pages.

But that public outcry was overblown, as the Tallahassee Democrat reported last fall. Public records requested by SPLC showed only two parents requested a refund, and no one requested a reprint.

As SPLC's Gary Green said, "If journalism bowed to the objections of a few, many important stories would never be told."

TRAINING/GUIDES



Legal Fellow Ellen Goodrich

143



TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

4,524



STUDENTS & ADVISERS IN
22 STATES (PLUS D.C.
& NATIONAL EVENTS)

101,000



WEBSITE VISITORS

Through a robust offering of free trainings and online guides, SPLC educates thousands of students annually on topics including **covering protests**, **public records**, **libel**, the **First Amendment**, **press freedom advocacy** and more.

We partner with student media conventions and other groups to offer training sessions on these topics, and we educate students across the country through our popular **"SPLC in the Classroom" virtual program**.

"The sheer effort and time SPLC spent helping me is not only appreciated by our newspaper, but the entire college community. Without SPLC's help, there is no way my article could have gotten published."

— STUDENT JOURNALIST WHOSE STORY RESULTED IN CHANGES TO THEIR COLLEGE'S TITLE IX OFFICE

LEGAL HOTLINE

SPLC's free Legal Hotline is the first line of defense for student journalists and educators looking for answers to their media law questions or support in fighting censorship.

Our attorneys answered 941 inquiries during the 2023-2024 school year, related to **public records**, **copyright**, **photographer's access**, **reporters' privilege**, **libel**, **artificial intelligence** and more. Our team also works to proactively head off possible issues by reviewing students' in-depth stories to flag potential legal concerns before publication — a service students likely wouldn't have access to otherwise.

SPLC also has an extensive network of partners who we call upon when necessary for additional support. Students have access to our **Attorney Referral Network** of more than 250 pro bono media law attorneys across the country.

941



HOTLINE INQUIRIES

47



STATES (PLUS D.C.)

2000+



STUDENTS & ADVISERS

78



STORIES VETTED

This spring, senior legal counsel Mike Hiestand surpassed **answering 20,000 requests on the hotline**. Since joining SPLC in 1991, he's been part of virtually every major student media case, but he says the most memorable calls are when students used their voices to make a difference.

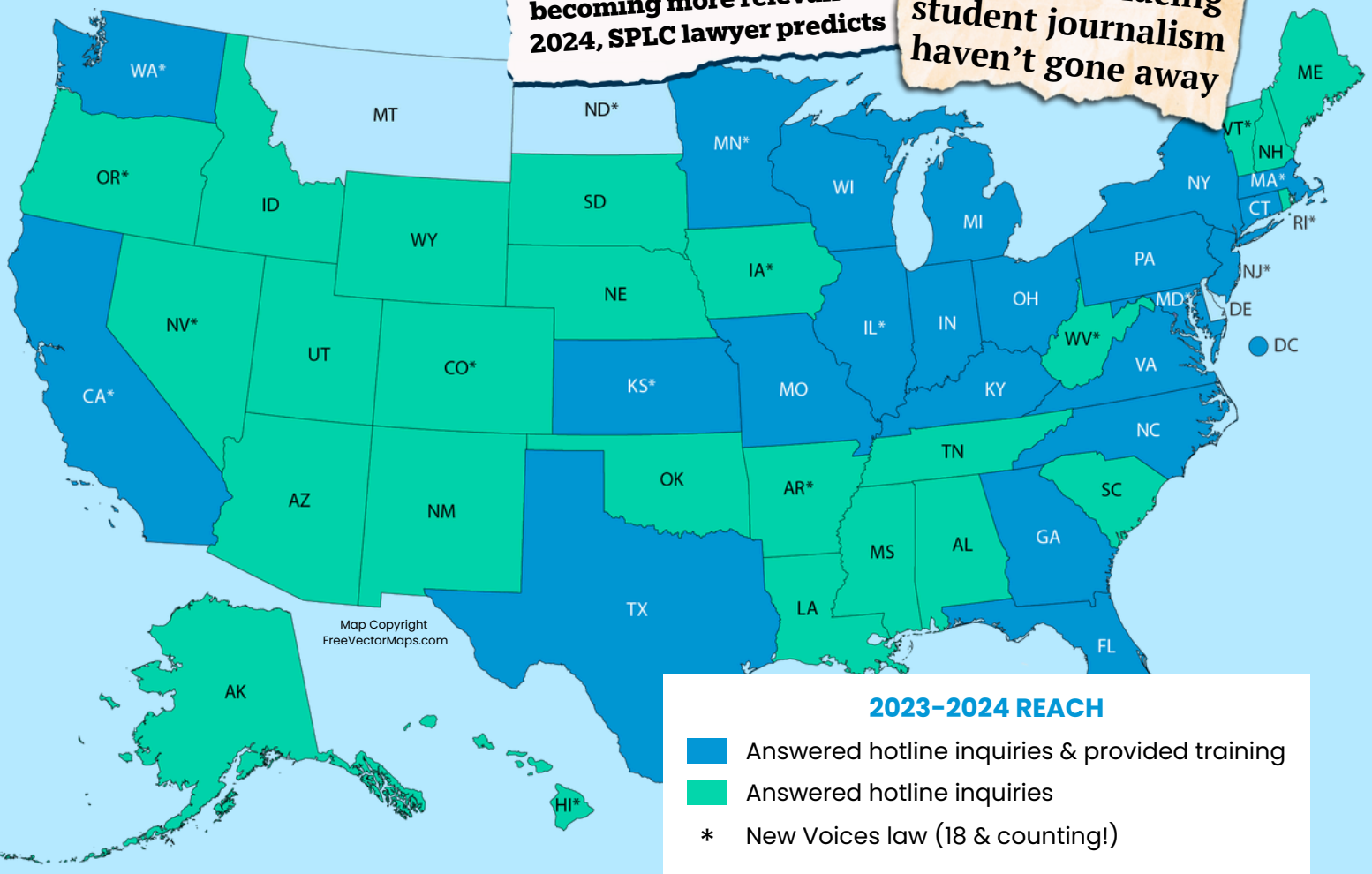


Read Mike's reflections on hitting 20,000 at splc.org/mike

NATIONAL REACH

The Nutgraf
Student journalism
becoming more relevant in
2024, SPLC lawyer predicts

**Columbia
Journalism
Review.**
The threats facing
student journalism
haven't gone away



Empowering thousands, in almost every state

Enabling big investigations on and off campus

In **Texas**, SPLC worked with The Battalion at Texas A&M University on its [investigation into past abuse allegations against members of a church](#) that recruits heavily from the student body. Reporter Nicholas Gutteridge spoke with multiple sources alleging abuse, reviewed court records, emails and more, with an SPLC attorney providing pre-publication vetting. “Those stories really helped drive home my passion for writing and journalism,” Gutteridge said. “[SPLC’s] help was really vital in that.”

Protecting student media’s independence

In **Utah**, over the course of several months, SPLC attorneys helped the staff of the *Daily Utah Chronicle* at the University of Utah maintain their First Amendment right to [independently decide how to moderate comments](#) on their website.

Standing up to a libel suit

In **Florida**, SPLC attorneys helped the staff of the University Press at Florida Atlantic University [find pro bono counsel](#) to fight a libel lawsuit brought by the subject of an investigative story published two years earlier. Florida lawyer Dineen Pashoukos Wasylik is a member of SPLC’s nationwide Attorney Referral Network, and a former SPLC intern. “SPLC put me on the path to be a lawyer and I am glad to give back,” [Wasylik said](#).

Supporting transparency through public records

In **Washington**, student journalists [won their five-year lawsuit](#) against Western Washington University over the disclosure of sexual assault records. A judge ordered the university to pay \$111,780 in penalties. The former students thanked SPLC for our support throughout the lawsuit.

Challenging aggregation sites who copy content

In **Pennsylvania**, SPLC attorneys helped a student editor use copyright law to convince the administrators of an AI-powered aggregation website to stop poaching their content without permission. This has been a growing problem for student media and a key reason we [developed a guide](#) on considerations of AI for student journalists.

Changing the student press rights landscape

SPLC staff provided in-person or written testimony — alongside students, educators and others — in support of New Voices bills in **Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin**. We also testified virtually with the **Hawaii** state Board of Education as it revised its student media policy to be in compliance with the state’s New Voices law.

Supporting students through newest threats

Lawrence journalists challenge school's monitoring tool as a threat to press freedom

Four Lawrence (Kansas) High School student journalists convinced their school district to exclude their newsgathering materials from an AI-powered tool that scans students' files. *The Budget* newspaper editors spent months arguing the tool — which flags and removes content in the district's Google workspace it deems a safety risk — violated student privacy and their press freedom rights.

The students had SPLC's support throughout their fight. In a letter to the district, SPLC likened the scanning of newsroom files to the August 2023 police raid of the *Marion County Record* not far from Lawrence. We explained that it is illegal to "bust down the front door of a newsroom to search journalists' notes and computer files. School districts and other public officials should take note that they cannot employ a software system that effectively creates a back door for doing the same thing."

Hundreds of students and staff wore Tinker-style black armbands to support their efforts. The students said their experience is a warning for other student media nationwide that software may be used by their districts to monitor their files too.

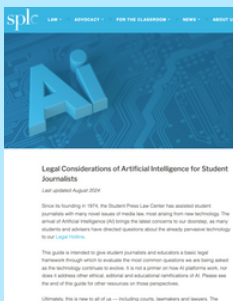


Lawrence High School seniors (L-R) Jack Tell, Natasha Torkzaban, Maya Smith and Morgan Salisbury spent five months convincing district administrators that the district's monitoring software posed a threat to their press freedom rights.

"The Student Press Law Center was able to help us in a big way this spring.... They provided expert legal advice and didn't shy away from a fight. They also helped us get connected with local lawyers when we decided to push the issue further. We'd like to thank them for lighting a fire under us to always be vigilant when it comes to protecting our rights."

— THE BUDGET EDITORS, LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL

THE LAWRENCE TIMES
Lawrence journalism students convince district to reverse course on AI surveillance they say violates freedom of press



SPLC educates journalists on the legal risks of artificial intelligence

We have helped student journalists with many novel issues of media law over the decades, from the rise of the Internet in the 1990s to navigating the latest questions about artificial intelligence. Students started asking about the legalities of AI before ChatGPT even became a well-known phrase. Our attorneys answered their questions on the hotline, taught a popular "Legal Considerations of AI" session at several conventions, and developed a guide that helps newsrooms evaluate these growing tools. As the prevalence of AI's use grows, we will continue to provide students with the latest guidance on this ever evolving issue.

Expanding press freedom through state legislation

MINNPOST

New Voices law further protects student journalists from censorship

NEW VOICES

New Voices is an **SPLC-coordinated, student-powered grassroots movement to protect student press freedom with state laws.**

These nonpartisan laws counteract the impact of the 1988 Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier Supreme Court decision, which carved students journalists out of the First Amendment and permitted administrators broad discretion to censor them.

The New Voices movement continued its impressive momentum in 2024, with **Minnesota becoming the fourth state in less than three years** to adopt student press freedom protections.

Advocates credited a decade of persistent advocacy, recent changes in the legislature's makeup and strong student voices for their success. Minnesota was the first New Voices law to pass as part of an omnibus bill with other legislation, which could serve as a model for other advocates in the future.

Other states saw progress, too: One chamber of the **Wisconsin** legislature unanimously passed New Voices legislation, and **Missouri's** bill passed out of its Senate committee. **Pennsylvania** advocates secured their bill's first hearing. Bills were also introduced in **Arizona, Kentucky, Nebraska, New York** and **North Carolina**.

With SPLC's support, advocates in these states and others spoke with legislators, testified in hearings, organized lobby days, wrote op-eds and educated others to build their coalitions. In addition to building New Voices momentum, these students also learned leadership and advocacy skills that will prepare them to be lifelong engaged citizens. Today's new voices are tomorrow's leaders.



"It is more important than ever before for our students to learn media literacy and communication skills that they can carry with them in whatever path they take after high school."

— REP. CHERYL YOUAKIM, MINN. BILL SPONSOR

CONTINUED MOMENTUM

Thanks to SPLC-backed advocates, four states have adopted New Voices legislation in less than three years:



Minnesota
May 2024



West Virginia
March 2023



Hawaii
May 2022



New Jersey
December 2021

GROWING REACH

Student press freedom is now guaranteed to

10.5 million

high school & college students in

18 states

Cultivating student leaders

Our 2024 [New Voices Student Leaders Institute](#) welcomed **32 students from 20 states**. The institute is a free, two-week online program for high school students to improve their leadership and organizing skills, and to identify the best strategy to expand student press freedom in their communities. They then share those lessons with other students as leaders within the New Voices movement.



“The Institute helped me to be more confident in myself.... Now, I’m excited to start reaching out to other student journalists and start organizing.”

— **AVA LEYBA**, NEW MEXICO



“[T]he most important thing I learned from the institute was not to lose hope for our movement. While the fight is long, even small actions can lead to progress.”

— **CARINA NICODEMUS**, MARYLAND



WISCONSIN STUDENTS FIGHT FOR PRESS FREEDOM

The Badger State came close to passing New Voices this year, thanks to [high school junior Simon Mehring](#) (pictured above) and others.

Mehring and fellow student Kiley Clarquist attended SPLC’s Student Leaders Institute in 2023, which he said gave him the skills and confidence to lead advocacy efforts this year.

“The New Voices campaign in Wisconsin really is student-led,” Mehring said. “The success we’ve had so far — a bipartisan bill passed the state house 98-0 — exemplifies the power of student voices and what can happen when we work together to protect student journalists’ rights. However, this progress wouldn’t have been possible without the work and support of SPLC.”

ROBUST IMPLEMENTATION

SPLC knows that passing state-wide legislation is just the first step in ensuring student press freedom. For New Voices to be effective, students must know about their rights and school districts need to adopt and apply student media policies reflecting these newly acquired student press freedoms. We’ve been working with grassroots advocates in several states to test strategies and share lessons learned.

Soon after Minnesota passed in May, we shared a new Know Your Rights guide with stakeholders, including 500+ administrators from each of the state’s school districts.

In West Virginia, advocates say the passage of New Voices in 2023 has begun to reinvigorate student media in the state. The West Virginia Journalism Education Association and SPLC continued to monitor the status of districts adopting local policies, and we engaged journalism programs at Marshall University and West Virginia University, as well as a local law firm, to help in our implementation efforts.

Hawaii’s state Board of Education adopted a student media policy that aligns with the state’s law in May, two years to the day after the law passed. In the coming year, we will train school administrators on this new policy.

STUDENT PRESS FREEDOM DAY

the
daily

ballstatedaily.com

This Student Press Freedom Day, the Daily News Editorial Staff calls for support in student journalism.

Building Community & Taking Action for Student Press Freedom

The sixth annual Student Press Freedom Day saw students across the country undertake a wide range of activities meant to promote their rights. Through these efforts, and with our support, millions of Americans heard about the importance of student media and press freedom.

Raising Awareness

Students led the charge in educating their communities on the First Amendment and student press freedom. Across America, they hosted events and wrote dozens of editorials, columns and social posts. They also published powerful stories demonstrating their watchdog role and explaining how they do their work.



Staff of The All State at Austin Peay State University set up a table in the student center to talk with students about press freedom and the newspaper's role on campus. (Photo by Michael Dann)

SPLC organized five educational events (including with CNN's Katelyn Polantz and the *Washington Post*'s Taylor Lorenz) and built a coalition of more than 35 national partners, our largest group ever. We also coordinated student journalists' appearances in multiple commercial outlets, including FOX32's "Good Morning Chicago" — reaching more than 9 million people.

Taking Action

The Day was also a catalyst for significant New Voices advocacy across the country. For example, New York advocates hosted a briefing with legislators featuring students, SPLC and First Amendment icon Mary Beth Tinker.



Feb. 22, 2024

A nationwide day to build a community behind student journalists as we:

- **raise awareness** of censorship and other challenges they face
- **take action** to advance their press freedoms.

The 2024 theme was **Powerfully Persistent** — highlighting their *powerful* journalism and their *persistent* advocacy to ensure their voices are heard.



Calif. Students File Lawsuit Claiming High School Paper Censorship

How about taking action for press freedom by suing your principal? In a lawsuit filed on Student Press Freedom Day, two California student journalists and a student media adviser accused their school of "bullying, threatening and coerc[ing]" the student newspaper staff to "save face" and then retaliating by cutting a journalism class and removing the adviser.

SPLC attorneys worked with the students while they experienced censorship and connected them with the law firm Jassy Vick Carolan LLP, which filed the lawsuit.



"I want to ensure the long-term stability and prosperity of my school's journalism program, and I want student journalists at my school to be empowered to stand by their rights to publish stories that need to be told."

— HANNA OLSON, CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



While the news industry struggles, college students are supplying some memorable journalism

PART OF THE LOCAL NEWS SOLUTION

With the decline of legacy news organizations, many student media outlets have filled the void by expanding their coverage.

Universities are also testing new models of student journalism to help address local news deserts. The Center for Community News has found that

100+

*universities have launched new student-reporting programs, with more than **2,800 student reporters** producing*

17,000+

local and state-government stories last school year. Their reporting was published in 1,300+ partner news organizations, reaching

23.5 million+

readers throughout the country.

These numbers will continue to grow, so SPLC must also grow to ensure these new student journalists have the strong legal support they need to do this critical reporting.

Evolving to meet student journalists' expanded role

This spring's historic campus protests were a vivid demonstration of how the nation increasingly relies on student journalists to understand what is happening on college campuses. But today's student reporters are also producing consequential journalism from well beyond the campus walls.

They are increasingly filling gaps in local news coverage through evolving student media organizations and a growing number of student-reporting programs partnering with local news outlets. As SPLC celebrates our 50th anniversary, we're also evolving alongside these student journalists to help this growing cohort of newsrooms navigate the legal considerations that come with sophisticated accountability and investigative reporting in their states and communities.

Knight Foundation supports SPLC's evolution

Thanks to a three-year, \$1.2 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, we're expanding our legal services to provide the growing number of student reporters the knowledge and confidence to pursue important stories.

"We have seen a growing number of student journalists ably fill the local news gap for millions of Americans, winning awards and holding power to account," said Duc Luu, Knight's Director of Journalism. **"They are not just student journalists. They are journalists. Period. And their work needs to be bolstered with robust legal advice and guidance. That's why we are proud to support SPLC's ambitious plans."**

Focused on building sustainability for the future

As we celebrate 50 years, we are reflecting on what is needed to ensure that SPLC continues to provide free legal support to thousands of students and educators by securing our long-term sustainability. Thanks to Knight Foundation's generosity, we recently hired our first development director in many years.

Support from individuals, foundations and partners has been vital to our success thus far. As we mark this milestone, it is essential that we continue to expand the partnerships and resources that support our critical services for the next generation. If you believe in this work, please consider contributing at splc.org/donate or emailing giving@splc.org to join this movement.

OUR 2023–2024 DONORS

The Student Press Law Center gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the organizations and individuals who helped us promote, support and defend the free press rights of student journalists. Donors are critical for us to continue our work preparing the journalists of tomorrow and ensuring students' voices are heard. Thank you!

The list below represents those who gave \$100 or more between Jan. 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, including those organizations who matched their employees' gifts to SPLC.

Foundations & Nonprofits

American Press Institute
Association of University Student Media Managers
Center for Community News
CNN
Democracy Fund
Garden State Scholastic Press Association
Google
The Gridiron Club and Foundation
Halperin Family Foundation
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Jostens
Journalism Education Association
Journalism Education Association of Northern California
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— NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist
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