Resolution No. 1: Thanking SPJ President Dana Neuts

Submitted by: SPJ Resolutions Committee

Resolutions Committee recommendation: Favorable

Delegate action:

WHEREAS, during the past year, President Dana Neuts represented the Society of Professional Journalists' with integrity, professionalism and passion; and

WHEREAS, President Neuts is the first president of the Society who works as a freelancer; and

WHEREAS, President Neuts has amazingly juggled her robust freelance writing career, the care and feeding of a small, needy canine named Jellybean and being an outstanding mother of her daughter, Brooke, with the responsibilities for many SPJ matters great and small; and

WHEREAS, President Neuts has sought opportunities to advance SPJ's ability to communicate clearly and professionally with our membership and the public at large; and

WHEREAS, President Neuts' quick response and action to journalism-related events improved the timeliness and impact of SPJ's reaction; and

WHEREAS, her commitment to openness and collaboration made the internal workings of the SPJ Board more transparent; and

WHEREAS, her high-visibility advocacy further reinforced SPJ's key role in safeguarding a free press and transparency in the government's relationship with citizens; and

WHEREAS, west-coast dweller President Neuts has accepted early-morning calls at absolutely ridiculous hours before dawn to get tasks accomplished; and

WHEREAS, President Neuts adopted the phrase #SPJlove that swept the nation and overloaded SPJ headquarters' servers; and

WHEREAS, under President Neuts' leadership, the 2015 Excellence in Journalism national conference in Orlando, Florida, offered journalists from throughout the country an outstanding buffet of training, education and inspiration; and

WHEREAS, President Neuts has set a high bar for future national presidents through her deeply collaborative management style,

THEREFORE be it resolved that the delegates of the Society of Professional Journalists meeting in convention September 20, 2015, thank Dana Neuts for her dedicated service to the Society during her term as president of the nation's oldest and most broad-based organization of journalists.

Resolution No. 2: Thanking SPJ staff

Submitted by: SPJ Resolutions Committee

Resolutions Committee recommendation: Favorable

Delegate action:

WHEREAS, the headquarters staff of the Society of Professional Journalists make it possible for SPJ to provide strong professional development programs, defend the public's right to know through First Amendment advocacy, and guide journalists to act ethically; and

WHEREAS, the staff has created yet another superlative national journalism conference in collaboration with the Radio Television Digital News Association and National Association of Hispanic Journalists; and

WHEREAS, the stupendous display of "talent, truth and energy" of Excellence In Journalism 15 would not be possible without the SPJ staff's deep knowledge, tireless energy, two-way radios, running shoes and Twitter #hashtags; and

WHEREAS, the SPJ staff has done and continues to do its good work despite the SPJ board of directors and a motley confederation of past presidents who think they know everything; and

WHEREAS, the SPJ staff's high level of professionalism, skill, ingenuity, nimbleness, and ability to keep the EIJ15 train running smoothly on very little sleep;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society's convention of delegates, meeting in Orlando, Florida, thanks the SPJ staff for all its work and gives the staff a hearty "Let's have another!" for its work on Excellence in Journalism 15.

Resolution No. 6: On Public Information Office Media Control

Submitted by: SPJ Freedom of Information Committee

Resolutions Committee recommendation: Favorable

Delegate action:

WHEREAS, Society of Professional Journalists research has documented a growing trend among government public information officers of requiring employees to report all contacts with the press to the PIO; and

WHEREAS, SPJ research also has documented a growing trend among government PIOs to monitor interviews and pre-approve questions and information being given by subject matter experts; and

WHEREAS, SPJ research has found that, while these practices are at their worst at the federal level, they have filtered down to the regional, state and local levels of government PIOs; and

WHEREAS, SPJ research finds that journalists believe government employees often severely limit what they say under such mandates for notification and monitoring, to the extent that sometimes crucial information is withheld from the public; and

WHEREAS, government agencies can misuse monitoring and pre-approval requirements as ways to chill speech, spin the message and hide wrongdoing; and

WHEREAS, when public information officers are involved, journalists may be forced to use anonymous sources for some of the best stories about issues of vital importance to the public, which is not ideal; and

WHEREAS, journalists need agency experts to be able to speak candidly, including in instances when data or experts' interpretation of the data differ from official reports or agency spin; and

WHEREAS, when PIOs use pre-approval and monitoring to curtail what journalists can ask and how interviewees can answer, they exert a form of control over how reporters understand an issue and what they write — and hence the information the public receives; and

WHEREAS, SPJ leaders, along with the leaders of 52 other media organizations, wrote a letter to President Obama urging him to stop these practices in federal agencies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists meeting in convention in Orlando, Florida, again urges President Obama to stop the practices of federal PIOs that prevent important information from reaching the public.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that SPJ urges government PIOs to focus on facilitating efforts of journalists to report the news and reduce their attempts to control the message.

Submitted by Carolyn Carlson

Resolution No. XX: Remembering Dori J. Maynard

Submitted by: Resolutions committee

Resolutions committee recommendation: Favorable

Status:

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard was a courageous and passionate advocate for diversity in journalism and public discussion; and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard demanded that the American news industry live up to its highest purpose in teaching each group in society about the realities and concerns of all constituencies; and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard was challenged In recent years by the increasing attacks on black men by white police officers in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri, which made her mission even more critical; and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard in one of her final yet undelivered speeches said: "For the sake of the country, for the sake of ourselves, this cannot continue," and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard led the Oakland, California, based institute founded by her father, Robert C. Maynard, and built upon his vision that was aimed at helping understand the impact of events and issues across race, class, gender, generation and geography; and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard's father and stepmother Robert C. and Nancy Hicks Maynard, the first black owners of a major metropolitan newspaper imbued her with a deep respect for journalism and its power to change lives and communities; and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard on her final day was developing new ideas, raising funds and reaching out to others to chart a new course for the Maynard Institute; and

WHEREAS Dori J. Maynard was one of those people who showed up and by showing up made a difference in the conversation; and

WHEREAS, Dori J. Maynard once said her middle initial stood for Journalism and worked at such newspapers as the Bakersfield Californian and the Detroit Free Press, and;

WHEREAS Dori J. Maynard was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, an honor also bestowed on her father; and

WHEREAS Dori J. Maynard understood that discussion and action to make America's newsrooms more diverse was essential to how important stories were covered;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Society of Professional Journalists in convention in Orlando, Florida, on September 20, 2015, mourns the death at 56 of Dori J. Maynard, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists honors the passion and dedication of Dori J. Maynard, whose contributions to the journalism profession broadly and the Society and its Sigma Delta Chi Foundation specifically are immeasurable and profound.

Resolution No. XX: Honoring Steve Geimann

Submitted by: Irwin Gratz

Resolutions committee recommendation: Favorable

WHEREAS, Steve Geimann became a member of the Society of Professional Journalists in 1980; and

WHEREAS, Steve chaired the Society's national ethics committee; and

WHEREAS, Steve has served as the Society's Representative on the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication for many years; and

WHEREAS, Steve served as SPJ Region 2 Director; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, Steve thought he had lost a race for at-large director by three votes, only to be told later that day the vote had really been a tie, but decided to let the earlier result stand; and

WHEREAS, Steve served as SPJ President in 1996-97; and

WHEREAS, Steve won the Wells Key, the highest honor bestowed on SPJ members in 2001; and

WHEREAS, Steve served as President of the Society's supporting foundation, the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation from 2006 to 2012; and

WHEREAS, throughout the decades Steve has faithfully served the Society's mission to "improve and protect" journalism; and

WHEREAS, Steve has contributed most generously to the SPJ Legal Defense Fund, mostly by winning bidding wars with an aggressiveness at times normally reserved for wars of the military variety; and

WHEREAS, Steve Geimann's employer, Bloomberg, is re-assigning Steve to a new position based in London, England; and

WHEREAS, Steve has indicated this will force him to step down from the SDX board when his current term expires,

NOW THEREFORE the Society of Professional Journalists, meeting in convention in Orlando, Florida, does honor and thank Steve Geimann for his many years of board and officer service, and for his many successful Legal Defense Fund bids.

Resolution: Commemorating the lives of WDBJ-7 journalists Alison Parker and Adam Ward

Submitted by: Robyn Sidersky of SPJ Virginia Pro and Robyn Davis Sekula of SPJ Louisville Pro

Resolutions committee recommendation: Favorable

Delegate action:

WHEREAS, Alison Parker and Adam Ward served as journalists for WDBJ-7, a television station in Roanoke, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Alison Parker, a reporter, and Adam Ward, a photojournalist, worked together serving the public's right to know and broadcasting community stories throughout Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Alison Parker and Adam Ward were known for their outstanding skills as journalists, good nature, compassion and friendship with colleagues; and

WHEREAS, Alison Parker, 24, and Adam Ward, 27, were just beginning their journalism careers when they were shot to death by a former colleague during a live broadcast on Aug. 26, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the journalism careers of Alison Parker and Adam Ward were cut painfully short by their merciless murder; and

WHEREAS, journalists who give their real-time location as they broadcast live may now feel an increased sense of fear as they report even on seemingly innocuous events; and

WHEREAS, television station WDBJ-7 did an exemplary job covering the story of the murder of two colleagues, showing the "pinnacle of good and ethical journalism," according to SPJ ethics chair Andrew Seaman;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists, in convention in Orlando, Florida, mourns their loss and extends its deepest sympathies to the family, friends and professional colleagues.

THEREFORE BE IT EVEN FURTHER RESOLVED that a moment of silence will be observed after adopting this resolution to commemorate the lives and work of Alison Parker and Adam Ward.

Resolution No. XX: Supporting the Need for Legal Protection for Student Journalists and Advisers

Submitted by Frank LoMonte, executive director of Student Press Law Center, and SPJ Member Michele Day

Resolutions committee recommendation: Favorable

Status:

WHEREAS journalism advisers have been removed from their positions at an alarming rate at colleges and universities nationwide, including during the past year at Fairmont State University, Northern Michigan University, Delta State University, Butler University and Muscatine Community College, and;

WHEREAS high schools in Langhorne, Pa., Rochester, Mich., and elsewhere throughout the country have placed their students under punitive “prior review” arrangements in response to students’ substantive coverage of issues of social and political concern, and;

WHEREAS outstanding high school journalism educators have been replaced in Shelton, Conn., Northern Highlands, N.J., and other schools throughout the country following conflicts with school administrators over lawful, non-disruptive editorial content.

WHEREAS the censorship of scholastic journalism disproportionately impacts the ability of young women, who make up the vast majority of high school newsrooms, to develop their voices as leaders and to be heard on matters of public importance;

WHEREAS state legislation such as the New Voices Act of North Dakota, which became law this year, can offer a measure of needed protection to student journalists and advisers against institutional retaliation;

WHEREAS the First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the freedom of the press, and those protections do apply to students, and such freedoms enable student-run publications to make vital information known to the community,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists, meeting in convention at Orlando, Florida, commends the North Dakota legislature and the New Voices of North Dakota, led by Professor Steve Listopad, for their efforts in enacting the New Voices of North Dakota Act.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Society urges its members to support and actively encourage the passage of similar state legislative protections for the independence of student media across the country.

Calling For: Renaming SPJ the “Society for Professional Journalism”

Submitted by: Michael Koretzky, Region 3 director

Resolutions committee recommendation: Neutral

Status:

WHEREAS, other organizations include supporters of whatever niche they fill, as shown by the National Organization for Women allowing men to join and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People having a racially diverse membership and;

WHEREAS, SPJ’s name doesn’t accurately reflect its current membership because many members and even many SPJ board members are not professional journalists and;

WHEREAS, a name that invites membership by a larger community of supporters would give SPJ more lobbying power with lawmakers not currently predisposed to a free press and;

WHEREAS, the name "Society of Professional Journalists" suggests that there is or should be a group representing unprofessional journalists and;

WHEREAS, this will probably result in much gnashing of teeth and rending of garments, this change is inevitable or the society will go down permanently;

THEREFORE be it resolved that SPJ rename itself the Society for Professional Journalism starting as soon as the articles, bylaws, policies and guidelines permit.

Resolution No. XX: Support for ending impunity

Submitted by: International Community

Resolutions Committee recommendation: Favorable

WHEREAS, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 90 percent of all killings of journalists go unsolved; and

WHEREAS, this unchecked impunity poses one of the greatest threats to press freedom in the world; and

WHEREAS, journalism organizations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and the InterAmerican Press Association have active campaigns to publicize and end impunity; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Society of Professional Journalists, meeting in convention September 20, 2015, offers its official support to the World Day Against Impunity, November 23, 2015; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Society of Professional Journalists encourages its communities, chapters and members to find ways to highlight and support the anti-impunity campaigns, including participating in local programs.

Resolution: Calling for media companies to protect those who witness and cover violence

Submitted by: Resolutions Committee

Resolutions committee recommendation: Favorable

Status:

WHEREAS, the Society of Professional Journalists calls for the media to seek truth and report it; and

WHEREAS, the duty of reporting can sometimes lead journalists into dangerous circumstances; and

WHEREAS, several journalists have died in the past year on the job, including Alison Parker and Adam Ward of WDBJ-7; and

WHEREAS, countless others across the United States and the world may not be directly affected by violence but may be charged with reporting on it in a way that can be traumatizing; and

WHEREAS, counseling services and therapy often help people cope with trauma witnessed or experienced in the workplace;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists, in convention in Orlando, Florida, urges media companies to protect and support their staff by offering:

- SAFETY EQUIPMENT for those sent to cover violence, including bulletproof vests, and gas masks and other protective headgear; and
- COUNSELING SERVICES for employees who witness crime or report on it frequently.

Resolution No. X: Advocating for the release of police body-worn camera footage

Submitted by: Matthew T. Hall, Region 11 director

Resolution Committee recommendation: Favorable

Resolution status:

WHEREAS, police use of force is dominating national headlines after police shootings in Ferguson, Mo., Los
Angeles, Cleveland, San Diego, North Charleston, S.C., Cincinnati and elsewhere in just the past 13
months; and

WHEREAS, police body-worn cameras are increasingly common in law enforcement agencies nationwide; and

WHEREAS, more and more police departments, including Boston and Baltimore just days ago, have taken steps
to implement body-worn camera pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, many police agencies cite increased accountability, transparency and public trust as reasons to
equip officers with body-worn cameras; and

WHEREAS, police chiefs in major cities such as San Diego and Los Angeles are now saying they would release
footage only in rare cases, if at all; and

WHEREAS, that position by police chiefs runs counter to the concept of government transparency and what the public believes is the purpose of body cameras, which is provide a record of what happened; and

WHEREAS, legislators in at least 15 states, including Arizona and California, have introduced bills to exempt
police body-worn camera footage from state public records laws or to limit what the public can access; and

WHEREAS, some law enforcement agencies, including the Washington, D.C. Police Department, plan to release
police body-worn camera footage taken in public spaces upon request; and

WHEREAS, other law enforcement agencies, including the Oakland Police Department, are showing police body-
worn camera video to members of the media but not releasing the footage to the public; and

WHEREAS, the freedom of the press is a constitutional right and the public's right to know is something to be
fiercely defended;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists, in consultation with other journalism organizations, including NABJ, NAHJ, AAJA, NAJA and NLGA, shall over the next year develop best practices for how police agencies weigh right-to-know considerations against privacy concerns and draft guidelines for when police should release body-worn camera video to the public.

Resolution No. XX: Commemorating Slain Journalists Worldwide

Submitted by: SPJ Resolutions Committee

Resolutions Committee recommendation: Favorable

Delegate action:

Whereas, the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics states: Journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough; and

Whereas, physical attacks against journalists because of their profession represent actions depriving the public of that free exchange of information; and

Whereas, this past year we saw an extreme example of intolerance and hostility to media free from control by outside forces in the brutal killings of our colleagues at *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris; and

Whereas, we are reminded that these killings in Paris represent less than a fifth of the 43 journalists who were slain so far this year just for doing their job; and

Whereas, we are reminded that since 2010, 329 journalists in 48 countries have been slain in the line of duty; and

Whereas, we are reminded that in our own hemisphere threats to journalists exist; and

Whereas, those slain in the past five years include, 18 in Brazil, 14 in Mexico, three each in Colombia and Honduras, two in Paraguay, and one each in Guatemala, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Panama and Ecuador; and

Whereas, since 2010, 30 journalists have been killed in Pakistan, 27 in Iraq, 21 in Somalia and 10 each in India and Egypt; and

Whereas, many of these killings have taken place to silence journalists investigating corruption, politics and human rights violations;

Therefore, be it resolved, the Society of Professional Journalists convened on September 20, 2015, express our heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of our fallen comrades; and

Be it further resolved, the Society of Professional Journalists encourage its chapters and members to find ways to honor our fallen colleagues by highlighting their sacrifices

to the cause of free press and speech; and

Be it be further resolved, we authorize the leadership of the Society of Professional Journalists to publicly express the organization's sympathy and support when another colleague is slain for “doing journalism.”

Resolution No. XX: Defending the First Amendment

Submitted by: Mac McKerral, SPJ member
Resolutions Committee Recommendation: Favorable
Resolution status:

WHEREAS, the Society of Professional Journalists considers one of its primary missions protection of “First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech”; and

WHEREAS, it remains critical for SPJ to maintain that important mission; and

WHEREAS, challenges to free speech and expression appear more frequently and in many more forms; and

WHEREAS, these challenges infringe upon the most important constitutional guarantee and weaken the Marketplace of Ideas; and

WHEREAS, these challenges undermine the foundation of our nation’s democratic principles and pose a threat to all individuals;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Society of Professional Journalists will staunchly oppose any effort to undermine the First Amendment tenet of free speech in all its forms, including but not limited to further creation of “Free Speech Zones,” creation and enforcement of “Speech Codes” and efforts to make “politically correct” language a standard.

Resolution No XX: Supporting Continued SPJ Involvement with ACEJMC

Resolution submitted by: George Daniels, former SPJ board member

Resolution Committee recommendation: Favorable

Resolution status:

WHEREAS, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), founded in 1945, now accredits 119 journalism, public relations, advertising or telecommunication programs; and

WHEREAS, the Society of Professional Journalists has been a consistent industry member of the Council since 1996; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the number of professional groups with a seat on the accrediting council has declined; and

WHEREAS, for the past 18 years, former SPJ President and SDX Foundation Board President Steve Geimann has served diligently as SPJ's member of the Accrediting Council, attending at least two Council meetings a year and participating on 21 site visits to review 19 schools in 15 states; and

WHEREAS, accreditation is considered the "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval for a growing number of journalism and mass communication programs, many of which are now outside the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Accrediting Council, through its rigorous review process every six years, has helped ensure that the next generation of journalists receives the most cutting-edge training in facilities and learning environments that are keeping pace with the rapidly changing conditions in our nation's newsrooms; and

WHEREAS, the Accrediting Council, through its Diversity Standard, has been one of the biggest players in ensuring inclusive journalism and mass communication curricular offerings, student bodies and faculty,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the Society of Professional Journalists, meeting in convention in Orlando, Florida, direct the SPJ National Board of Directors to maintain the Society's active involvement as a member of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, which includes payment of the annual industry membership fees and the travel expenses of its representative to Council meetings; and

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that SPJ, through its National Board of Directors, continues to appoint an SPJ representative to ACEJMC familiar with the core missions of the Society and whose experience as a working journalist provides the much-needed industry insight, a crucial part of the journalism and mass communication accreditation process.

Resolution No. XX: Urging Congress to Reform the Freedom of Information Act

Submitted by: Resolutions Committee

Recommendation: Favorable

WHEREAS, the federal Freedom of Information Act provides citizens and journalists with one of the best tools for obtaining information from the U.S. government; and

WHEREAS, one of the key missions of journalism is holding government officials accountable; and

WHEREAS, the Freedom of Information Act is approaching its 50th birthday on July 4, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the FOIA can be improved to encourage government accountability to the citizenry; and

WHEREAS, two resolutions pending before the U.S. Congress would:

- MODERNIZE the technology used by the federal government to receive and respond to FOIA requests to create a single online portal for submissions to all agencies;
- ENSURE future administrations start with the presumption of openness;
- REQUIRE agencies to make disclosable records available in a digital format; and
- EMPOWER the Office of Government Information Services to better mediate disputes between FOIA requesters and federal agencies,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Society of Professional Journalists in convention on September 20, 2015, strongly urges the U.S. House of Representatives to pass Resolution 653 and the U.S. Senate to pass Resolution 337.