Wisconsin Public Media
Editorial Practices for Ensuring Fairness and Accuracy

Wisconsin Public Media ("WPM") consists of Wisconsin Public Radio ("WPR") and PBS Wisconsin, services of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board. WPM serves the state of Wisconsin as its combined television, radio and online media source designed to inform, educate and entertain. At the core of this service is the news and public affairs programming of WPR and PBS Wisconsin. WPR and PBS Wisconsin are each directed by a leadership team that implements and assesses established editorial policies and industry best practices to ensure impartiality, fairness and accuracy in its news and public affairs programming. Our editorial practices are the cornerstone of our work and are reinforced through routine review of policies and practices, daily conversations, regular evaluations of our reports and staff trainings.

At WPM, we talk about editorial process, editorial integrity and transparency every day. This conversation takes place not only amongst journalists, hosts and producers; the conversation also occurs amongst our videographers, editors, engineers, and others who contribute to or create on-air and online content. We have an editorial firewall. What this means is that even though all staff at WPM have discussions about editorial process, editorial integrity, and transparency, the decisions about how, what, when and why to cover a story lie with the expert journalists that comprise our editorial staff.

WPM's news and public affairs content is distributed in several formats:

- Online through WPR.org and PBSWisconsin.org/News
- Online through social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook and Instagram
- Daily broadcast news on the WPR News network and WPR Music network
- Broadcast on PBS Wisconsin's *Here and Now*, a weekly half-hour program

While the editorial process unfolds along different timelines depending on the format we are using to provide information, it develops in a similar way across WPM's platforms. As with all media organizations, our formats, deadlines, access to sources and resources are factors that dictate which stories can be covered and the depth of that coverage.

The editorial staff meets regularly to discuss news developments, to consider the context of prior reporting on those issues, coverage in the upcoming days and weeks and decide the best way to produce that news coverage. This includes identifying possible sources and guests, as well as opportunities to gather audio or video content throughout Wisconsin. This becomes a conversation between producers, reporters and hosts/anchors.

This initial conversation continues throughout the week, as the WPM news staff continually looks for ways to achieve balanced coverage of the news. We identify sources that will effectively represent differing points of view. We talk to stakeholders and experts in the

relevant topic areas. We keep in touch with other established journalists and industry associations to develop a thorough understanding of policy implications. As a story develops, we check in with each other to look for additional ways to bring balance to the program and challenge each other by playing devil's advocate about our choices of guests and the perspectives they may bring to the conversation. We write news reports or scripts and review content once again and conduct fact checking before recording, broadcasting or publishing -- editing and evaluating again where possible for pre-recorded segments.

The editorial process continues after broadcast or online publication when we evaluate our content on a regular basis and review audience feedback. We track our coverage with databases that reveal how often we cover particular topics and feature particular guests. We review this information regularly to continually improve the diversity of our topics and guests, including, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, political affiliation and geographical diversity.

We follow journalistic guidelines modeled after industry standards.

- We always strive for accuracy in our reporting. We find and report verifiable facts and then add context so that our audience gets as complete a picture as possible.
- We treat all public officials the same, regardless of political affiliation, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, etc.
- We will not take a person's own words out of context or misrepresent what they say.
- We strive for fairness and impartiality in every news report we produce. Our journalism must be balanced and provide context.

In our efforts to achieve accuracy and balance in our coverage we follow established best practices. By seeking out diverse viewpoints on every issue, we gain greater balance and we also provide our audiences with the best coverage possible.

- We cover multiple sides of an issue. Our reporters seek multiple sources with diverse perspectives. Our producers are responsible for booking guests that present different perspectives on an issue and for taking callers who offer diverse viewpoints.
- Whenever possible we begin policy coverage with the proponent of a new idea or issue to set the groundwork for a discussion. We then bring in a guest with an opposing viewpoint to further the discussion.
- We often cover major topics on more than one show or report, addressing multiple angles of a story. Producers are responsible for coordinating with one another to ensure diversity in our coverage. We strive for achieving balance in each segment.
- When we are unable to book our first choice guest or reach the primary source on one side of an issue, we dig deeper. When, for example, a key lawmaker is unable or unwilling to join a show or make a comment, we seek alternate guests who can address the particular side of an issue.

- When we cannot find a guest or source to comment on one side of an issue, we will inform our audience. For example, we reached out to Lawmaker X to provide his or her viewpoint and he or she was unable to join us or declined our invitation.
- If a key guest or source cannot appear or declines to appear, we ask for a written statement from that guest, describing their viewpoint on the issue at hand to share with our audience.
- We continue to invite and reach out to key guests even if that individual routinely declines our requests in the hope that they will accept our invitation at some point.
- We use sound clips from other trusted media sources to provide balance and perspective and for remarks from key guests who are not available to comment on a story.
- We ask challenging questions of all guests, regardless of their viewpoint.
- Every story or conversation that appears on-air or online is the product of a team of professionals who assess the balance and tone of the story, editing where necessary, adding additional perspective or sources where available.
- Editorial Leadership regularly reviews overall coverage, the schedule of topics and guests between shows to ensure balance and diversity of topics.

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