



**CODE OF ETHICS
OF
Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting**
(An Arizona nonprofit corporation)

Overview

The Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting is an independent, nonprofit media organization dedicated to statewide accountability journalism in Arizona. AZCIR's mission is to produce, foster and promote investigative journalism through original and collaborative reporting, public events and trainings, for the betterment of our communities.

This mission forms the foundation and direction of our code of ethics, which borrows liberally from other nonprofit newsrooms such as The Associated Press, The Texas Tribune, ProPublica, The Center for Investigative Reporting, and NPR.

These guidelines and policies are meant for our organizational staff, but also extend to contractors and freelancers working on journalistic projects for AZCIR. Exceptional circumstances may require exceptions to these rules, which must always be approved in advance by the AZCIR Board of Directors. As the journalism industry continues to evolve, we will revise this code with it.

Although AZCIR's business model is a relatively new approach to journalism, our unwavering commitment to journalism ethics is not.

Accuracy and Attribution

- Our reporting on all platforms will be truthful, transparent and respectful; our facts will be accurate, complete and fairly presented. Our analysis will represent our best independent judgment, not our preferences or those of our sources. There will be no hidden agendas in our endeavors.
- If we make a mistake in our reporting, we will work quickly to fully address the error, correcting it within the story and detailing the error on the story page. If a reader discovers an error, they are encouraged to email us at corrections@azcir.org.
- AZCIR journalists will not republish stories, images or other content from outside sources without permission and credit. Plagiarism, fabrication and misappropriation of intellectual property are all grounds for immediate termination.
- Any information taken from other published or broadcast sources should receive credit within the body of a story, or where appropriate on related visual journalism such as photos, video or graphical elements.
- AZCIR photo editors and video producers may improve the technical quality of photos and video or audio recordings, but may not alter the substance or meaning of that media. All photo illustrations, graphics or animations will be clearly labeled as such. See

more below on digital media integrity.

- Not everyone understands that "off the record" or "on background" don't mean the same things. Before any interview in which any degree of anonymity is expected, there should be a discussion in which the ground rules are set explicitly so that the interviewee fully understands the interviewer's intent regarding disclosure of the interviewee's identity.

Sourcing

- Our journalists will do their best to refrain from quoting or attributing information to anonymous sources. Senior editors may approve rare exceptions to this rule if the information is critical to the story, we are certain the source is reliable and all other means to get the information on the record have been exhausted. As much as possible, we will identify in our reporting any bias we know our sources have. Anonymous sources should know that the reporter will share their identify with a senior editor, who will also keep that information confidential.
- Our journalists will never misrepresent themselves or mislead a source to get an interview or story. Our reporters and staff will always identify themselves as journalists, when asked. We do not use hidden cameras or microphones, go undercover or pay for interviews.
- Multiple efforts will be made to contact the primary subjects, sources and/or organizations of findings in our stories. We will give a reasonable amount of time to respond before we publish, although what is "reasonable" may depend on the urgency and competitiveness of the story. If we are unable to reach those involved, we will explain in the story our efforts to contact said parties.

Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest

- AZCIR aggressively pursues all stories we deem as newsworthy and of significant value to our readers. Editorial decisions are made by journalists alone.
- Those who contribute to AZCIR, whether through financial, service-related or in-kind gifts, do so with the understanding that we are beholden only to quality investigative journalism. Our fundraisers inform all potential donors, in any form of contribution, that their support does not entitle them to preferential treatment or to relationships with newsroom staff, and in no way protect them from investigations of scrutiny. We maintain a separate Fundraising Policy that governs our activities relative to donors and our fundraising activities.
- All AZCIR donors or sponsors are publicly listed on our website. We do not accept anonymous donations.
- AZCIR journalists may not work on stories or projects in which they have a vested interest, whether financial or personal. They should avoid investment in companies or industries they regularly cover and instead are encouraged to invest in broadly diversified mutual funds. Senior editors must be promptly notified should a conflict, or

perceived conflict, arise. We maintain a separate Conflicts of Interest Policy applicable to all directors, officers, advisory board and committee members, and employees.

- AZCIR journalists are prohibited from (1) participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office, (2) inducing or encouraging violations of law or public policy, (3) causing any private inurement or improper private benefit to occur, and (4) taking any other action inconsistent with applicable provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and related regulations. This extends to signing petitions, participating in marches or protests, or other similar activities.
- AZCIR journalists seeking secondary employment or freelance work to supplement their income must be cleared by an editor to ensure the work does not conflict with their responsibilities at AZCIR.
- Senior editors at AZCIR work often with other divisions of the organization – including marketing, sponsorship and development – to support, promote and enhance editorial efforts. Editorial employees may promote AZCIR fundraising initiatives on their personal social media accounts or digital branding venues. They do so at their own discretion and are under no obligation to do so.
- Editorial employees may moderate panels and speak at events, which include AZCIR events underwritten by corporate sponsors, so long as their role is purely journalistic; sponsors do not determine the panelists, the subject matter or the line of questioning. AZCIR journalists may speak at events hosted by other companies or institutions so long as such speaking appearance is otherwise consistent with this Policy and AZCIR's other policies.
 - Reasonable expenses can be covered for AZCIR staff to attend speaking engagements or related events. However, senior staff should be notified prior to accepting any such engagements.
- AZCIR employees, contractors and interns may not accept any gift with more than a nominal value from any company, individual or institution that could have an interest in AZCIR's reporting. AZCIR journalists always pay our own way when traveling for editorial or business purposes. A gratuity, such as a pen, mug or certificate, given to a newsroom associate for being a guest speaker at a community meeting or service club can be accepted, as long as it is a token of appreciation given to every speaker. Our general rule in these cases is that we should not accept any item valued at \$25 or more – although the safest policy is to return or reject any such overture or gifts.
- All employees, contractors and interns with any responsibility for reporting or editing the news will refrain from partisan political activity of any kind, including making political contributions or displaying partisan signage. This same policy applies to all social media platforms and other methods of digital communication. Nothing in this Policy is intended to discourage AZCIR personnel from exercising the right to vote.

Digital Media Integrity

- Images used in AZCIR reporting must always tell the truth.
- The content of a photograph must not be altered in Photoshop or by any other means. No element should be digitally added to or subtracted from any photograph. The faces or identities of individuals must not be obscured by Photoshop or any other editing tool. Only minor retouching or the use of the cloning tool to eliminate dust on camera sensors and scratches on scanned negatives or scanned prints are acceptable.
- Minor adjustments in Photoshop are acceptable. These include cropping, dodging and burning, conversion into grayscale, and normal toning and color adjustments that should be limited to those minimally necessary for clear and accurate reproduction (analogous to the burning and dodging previously used in darkroom processing of images) and that restore the authentic nature of the photograph. Changes in density, contrast, color and saturation levels that substantially alter the original scene or the appearance of individuals are not acceptable. Backgrounds should not be digitally blurred or eliminated by burning down or by aggressive toning. The removal of “red eye” from photographs is not permissible.
- For video, AZCIR permits the use of subtle, standard methods of improving technical quality, such as adjusting video and audio levels, color correcting due to white balance, eliminating buzzing, hums, clicks, pops, or overly long pauses or other technical faults, and equalization of audio to make the sound clearer - provided the use of these methods does not conceal, obscure, remove or otherwise alter the content, or any portion of the content, of the image.

Additional Ethics Codes

In addition to this Policy, our journalists abide by ethical standards as defined and published by The Society of Professional Journalists and the National Press Photographers Association.

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