

2025

ILLINOIS PRESS ASSOCIATION

Editorial Contest Rules



Questions: Contact Cindy Bedolli at cbedolli@illinoispress.org
or call 217-241-1300

EDITORIAL CONTEST DEADLINE: 5 P.M. JAN. 23, 2026

Save the date!

IPF Convention

June 4, 2026

Par-A-Dice Hotel Casino

7 Blackjack Blvd.

East Peoria, IL 61611

2025 ILLINOIS PRESS ASSOCIATION EXCELLENCE IN NEWS CONTEST RULES

(For work published Jan. 1, 2025 – Dec. 31, 2025)

NOTE: In these rules, “division” refers to circulation division and “class” refers to the subject matter category of the entry.

1. A daily newspaper is defined as a newspaper that produces a print **or** an electronic edition more than three days a week.

2. To compute circulation, both print and electronic subscriptions should be counted. Do not double-count free electronic subscriptions which are provided to paid print subscribers.

3. Contest is open to Illinois Press Association regular paid members only. Each entry is to be submitted electronically at <http://www.newspapercontest.com/Contests/IllinoisPressAssociation.aspx> INCLUDING General Excellence. If you cannot submit an entry electronically for some reason or have any other trouble accessing the submission website, please contact Cindy Bedolli. Members must register each year. Registrations from last year are no longer active. The Association code is: **IPA2025**

4. Out-of-state IPA member newspapers are eligible to enter all classes excluding General Excellence. Entries in other classes must pertain to Illinois people and/or events. These newspapers are not eligible for the Sweepstakes Awards.

5. **Entries must be received in the IPA office by 5 P.M. Jan. 23, 2026.** Winners will be announced via email after judging is complete, excluding placement, general excellence, and sweepstakes. Placements, general excellence, and sweepstakes winners will be announced Thursday, June 4, 2026, during the IPF Convention. If you need clarification of the rules, contact Cindy Bedolli at (217) 241-1300 or email cbedolli@illinoispress.org.

6. All entries must have been published between Jan. 1, 2025 and Dec. 31, 2025.

7. Entry fees are:

Entries submitted before Jan. 13, 2026 will be \$8.00 per entry.

Entries submitted between the dates of Jan. 13 – 23, 2026 will be \$10.00 per entry.

If deadline is extended, any late entries will be at a higher entry fee

8. Papers must be entered in the circulation division according to circulation data submitted in 2025. Group newspapers not entering the contest as a group but entering content created to be shared must submit those entries using the name of the largest newspaper for which the work was created. If they are entering content not created to be shared but shared incidentally, group newspapers may submit those entries under the name of the individual newspapers for which the work was created. (Group newspapers may enter as a single group, a subgroup, or as individual newspapers.)

For example: A newspaper is owned by a group. Content on the local village board is reported on for a specific newspaper. This entry would be entered for that individual newspaper even if the article was picked up and published by a larger, sister newspaper in the group.

A story or project on regional economics created by staff from more than one newspaper with the intent of publishing it in more than one newspaper would be entered under the newspaper with the highest circulation (or as a group).

Circulation divisions are:

Division A - Non-dailies 1,000 and under
Division B - Non-dailies 1,001 – 2,500
Division C - Non-dailies 2,501 and over

Division D - Dailies 10,000 and under
Division E – Dailies 10,001 – 30,000
Division F – Dailies 30,001 and over

Newspapers that share content should coordinate to determine if content is a single newspaper or the group's entry to ensure that it is entered by only one entity and in the appropriate circulation division. (Many entries may be entered in multiple classes but by only one newspaper or group. For example: a photo may be entered as part of a series and under personality portrait for the same newspaper or group but may not be entered by two individual newspapers within a group.)

Newspapers entering under a group name must combine circulation to determine its division. If they do not wish to enter as a group even though some or all content is shared, they must enter shared content under the name of the largest newspaper for which the work was created. Newspaper groups may enter the contest as a group for some entries and as individual newspapers for other entries. However, in those cases, sweepstakes points will not be combined for the group.

For example: Sunshine Media has a flagship daily, The Daily Sunshine, and six weekly newspapers. It could enter everything under “Sunshine Media” using its combined circulation. Or it could enter shared content under the largest newspaper for which the work was created. It could enter a shared special section under “Sunshine Media” using combined circulation, or it could enter the same section under “The Daily Sunshine” using only The Daily Sunshine’s circulation since it is the largest newspaper in the group for which the content was created. They could not, however, enter the same section under both “Sunshine Media” and “The Daily Sunshine.” They could enter the section under “Sunshine Media” and news articles under the names of individual newspapers. However, any sweepstakes points would not be combined.

Under the same scenario, the newspaper company could enter content created for its non-daily newspapers as a group and content created for The Daily Sunshine as an individual newspaper. It could even divide the non-dailies into two groups if there is a logical reason to do so. For instance, if two of the papers were in Southern Illinois and the others were in Northern Illinois, the company could opt to enter as two groups. If the name of the group does not appear on the contest website, please call the IPA at 217-241-1300 prior to uploading submissions.

TIP: Depending on the situation, a newspaper may enter as a group, a subgroup, as an individual newspaper or as the largest newspaper within a group. They may even do all three. However, they may not use the same entry across multiple platforms. A photo, for instance, may be entered in more than one class such as Photo Series and Personality Portrait for a newspaper, but it could not be entered in one class for the paper and a different class for the group.

Online-only newspapers may compete in the contest by competing in Division A but will not be eligible for the sweepstakes awards.

Newspapers may compete “up” a division: You may compete in a higher circulation division but not in a lower circulation division. If you choose to compete “up” then you must compete “up” with all classes, not just a few or one. In other words, newspapers in Division A may compete in Division B; Division B in C, Division C in D and so forth, but larger circulation papers may not compete in smaller circulation divisions. If you choose to compete in a larger circulation division, you must contact Cindy Bedolli at the IPA office (cbedolli@illinoispress.org or 217-241-1300) before you begin entering any the contest.

9. Non-daily includes semi- and tri-weekly newspapers.

10. There is no limit to the number of entries in each class except where noted in the rules.

11. Group newspapers with essentially the same content or makeup can submit only one entry in classes that specify dates or two consecutive issues. Group newspapers that have completely separate editorial staffs for reporting, writing and makeup may submit one entry per staff in those classes (provided the newspapers are entered individually and not as a group).

12. Twin publications that share 100 percent content or market are not considered separate publications. They may be submitted as consecutive issues.

13. Entries should be PDF files or URLs except photos, which should be high-resolution JPG files. If your newspaper has a paywall, include login information in the explanation field. Entries will be disqualified if there is a paywall and no login information was provided. Other file types and URLs may be submitted as noted in the rules for specific classes. Full-page PDFs may be submitted for individual entries as long as the entry is obvious. Best practice: match the name of the entry to the headline on the page.

14. An entry will be DISQUALIFIED if:

- The entry is not within the required date as indicated in the rules
- Payment is not made prior to February 1, 2026
- Specific rules as outlined in each class are not followed

Newspapers will NOT be notified of entry disqualifications.

15. On the entry submission, please include the name(s) of the person(s) who should be credited for the work. This is not necessarily the person who submitted the entry or is picking up the award. It should be the writer/reporter/photographer. Do not include titles in this field, only names. If there are more than three names, list staff.

16. No refunds will be issued.

17. Anyone submitting entries must have permission to do so from the publisher of the newspaper. Individuals may not enter the contest without consent of the newspaper publisher.

18. Entering the contest gives the IPA permission to publish the entries in print and online.

19. Once the contest has been judged, an award may be revoked if it becomes known that the entry was submitted in an incorrect division or altered since original publication date. Entries must be submitted exactly as they were published.

- 20.** Sweepstakes points will be awarded in all classes unless otherwise noted. See the section on Sweepstakes Awards for point allocation.
- 21.** Any situation arising that is not covered by these rules will be settled by the judges. The decision of the judges is final. This year, Hoosier Press Association members will be judging our contest.
- 22.** When registering for contest each registrant must submit the name, title, email address and phone number of a staff member who may be called on to serve as a judge for a reciprocating association's contest. You may list yourself as the volunteer judge.
- 23.** Awards that are not picked up at the convention will be mailed to the newspaper at the newspaper's expense.
- 24.** IPA has the option to reduce divisions to daily and non-daily or all in any class depending on number of entries. This will be determined before judging. Sweepstake points will still be awarded; points will be applied to regular division.

2025 ILLINOIS EXCELLENCE IN NEWS CONTEST CLASSES

CLASS 1 - GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Submit PDF file(s) of entire issues excluding inserts.

Criteria: General excellence is defined as overall presentation of the newspaper. Judging will be based on scope of coverage in news and other sections, excellence in writing and photography, promotion of community interests, vigor in the editorial page, advertising enterprise and design.

Entries: Upload one issue from the week of March 2-8, 2025, and one from any other week of your choice. Dailies may submit issues from different days in each week, but only one Sunday/Weekend issue may be submitted. One entry will consist of two editions.

CLASS 2 - COMMUNITY SERVICE

Criteria: Community service is a newspaper's efforts to promote and encourage any activity that benefits the development and well-being of the community or to serve the community by bringing about changes in programs or services to benefit the public. Judging will be on the selection of subject matter, local appeal, excellence in writing and presentation and effectiveness of effort. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Submit up to 10 files online to show the extent and results of campaign. The campaign must have begun or the majority of the campaign must have been staged during the contest period. Files created after Dec. 31, 2025, may be submitted, if needed to show completion of campaign. Use the explanation box below to provide a statement up to 3,000 characters outlining background and/or results of the campaign.

CLASS 3 - LOCAL EDITORIAL

Criteria: A single editorial or editorial series (maximum of five editorials) about the same topic regarding a local subject or a subject with a local angle. Judging will be on choice of subject matter, local appeal, and effectiveness of writing. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload up to five PDF files. A series will be judged as a single entry. A writer may submit more than one entry.

CLASS 4 - NEWS REPORTING – SINGLE STORY

Criteria: Judging will be on local interest, significance of subject matter, timeliness, effective use of quotes, impact of lead, thoroughness of reporting and clarity of writing. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload as many PDF files as necessary to complete entry, but all files must have been published on the same date as a single story. Sidebars to a story that appeared on the same date and in proximity to the mainbar may be included. They may be submitted as separate PDF files, or a PDF file of the entire page may be uploaded.

CLASS 5 – NEWS REPORTING - SERIES

Criteria: A series encompasses stories told over more than one day, whether investigative, explanatory, or ongoing coverage of a major event or issue. Judging will be on local interest, significance of subject matter, thoroughness of reporting, depth of information presented, timeliness, effective use of quotes, clarity of writing and evidence of enterprise. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload PDF files. Include links to digital content. Issues after Dec. 31, 2025, may be included if needed to show completion of the series. Use the explanation box to outline efforts required to develop and substantiate the series. Explanation is limited to 3,000 characters.

CLASS 6 – LOCALIZED NATIONAL STORY

Entries: Submit a digital version of a tearsheet with a localized national news story headline in explanation box. Entries will be judged on community-wide relevance, local angle, timeliness, quality of writing and clarity. Directly related sidebars may be considered where a single story in one issue is submitted.

CLASS 7 – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARD

Criteria: The Freedom of Information Award will be given to a newspaper that did the most during the previous year to uphold the principles of the First Amendment and to protect the public's right to know. It recognizes an effective job of furthering the cause of Freedom of Information. The award might be for news coverage, an editorial campaign, court actions or community education program designed to open meetings, to open records, etc. Use the explanation field to provide any necessary details.

Entries: Upload PDF(s) of your best editorial or news coverage exemplifying your Freedom of Information coverage from up to five related issues within the contest period. For instance, if you took on a school board records issue, you may submit up to five articles or editorials on that subject. If you also took on a city council issue, that would be a separate entry.

CLASS 8 – GOVERNMENT BEAT REPORTING

Criteria: Government beat reporting includes stories by the same writer where emphasis is placed on thoroughness of government reporting, enterprise, diversity of coverage and sources and mastery of subjects. Judging will be on local interest, significance of subject matter, thoroughness of reporting and clarity of writing of a government beat such as, but not limited to: education, courts, city, county, state, etc. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload PDF files. A single entry must include at least two but no more than five articles from the same government beat reporter and the same beat. Multiple stories will be judged as single entries. Entries may include related or unrelated stories from the beat. For example, an entry could consist of five unrelated school board stories, but they are all from the school board beat. A reporter may submit more than one entry from the same beat or from different beats.

CLASS 9 - BUSINESS/ECONOMIC REPORTING

Criteria: Business/economic reporting includes coverage of individual businesses, economic issues, recession, investing, workplace and consumer issues. Judging will be on local interest, significance of subject matter, thoroughness of reporting and clarity of writing. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload PDF files of up to five articles on the same subject. Different business/economic subjects should be submitted as separate entries. Series and stories with sidebars will be judged as single entries.

CLASS 10 – OBITUARY TRIBUTE

Criteria: Submit a digital copy of an obituary OF A PERSON (no dogs, cats, businesses, cars, etc.) written by a staff member during the contest period. More than one obit may be submitted but submit as separate entries. Entries will be judged on quality of writing, originality and being able to show how much value ordinary and not so ordinary lives have in a community.

Entries: Submit digital versions of tearsheet(s) with obituary's headline in name of entry field. Sidebars to a story that appear on the same date and in proximity to the mainbar may be included.

CLASS 11 - SPORTS NEWS

Criteria: Reporting of games, matches and other breaking sports news. An entry would include story and/or sidebars related to a single event. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload up to five PDF files from the same print date. Sports series that run over different days should be submitted under Class 12, Sports Feature.

CLASS 12 - SPORTS FEATURE

Criteria: For a single story or series on a topic or person, including enterprise work. Emphasis will be placed on subject matter, writing and originality. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload PDF files for up to five articles. Additional PDF files may be uploaded in support of the five articles (such as sidebars). Sidebars to a story that appear on the same date and in proximity to the main bar may be included.

CLASS 13 - FEATURE WRITING

Criteria: Recognizes feature stories or series including stories of human interest, personality profiles, and humorous writing. Judging will be on choice of subject matter, local appeal, impact of lead and effectiveness of writing. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload PDF files. Sidebars to a story that appear on the same date and in proximity to the mainbar may be included.

CLASS 14 – FEATURE WRITING – PERSONALITY PROFILE

Criteria: Recognizes personality profile feature stories or series. Judging will be on choice of subject matter, local appeal, impact of lead and effectiveness of writing. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Upload PDF files. Sidebars to a story that appear on the same date and in proximity to the mainbar may be included.

CLASS 15 – EDITORIAL PAGE

Criteria: Judging will be on choice of subject matter, local appeal, quality of staff writing and general appearance.

Entries: Upload one PDF file of the entire page from the week of April 13-19, 2025, and one from any other week of your choice. Op-Ed page may be included: the two (or more) pages will be judged as a single entry. Two publishing dates will comprise one entry. One entry per newspaper. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily.**

Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.

CLASS 16 – STORY/SERIES – AGRICULTURAL STORY

Criteria: Submit digital version of a tearsheet(s) with story headline in explanation box. Submissions may include news stories, features or editorials. Entries will be judged on newsworthiness, presentation and research. Directly related sidebars may be considered where a single story in one issue is submitted. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 17 - ORIGINAL COLUMN

Criteria: Columns are written from a point of view. Columns on any topic other than sports may be entered. (See Class 18 for sports column.) Judging will be on effectiveness of writing, human interest and local appeal. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Three columns comprise a single entry. Upload PDF files of three columns by the same staff member. More than one columnist may enter, but each columnist may submit only one entry consisting of three columns.

CLASS 18- SPORTS COLUMN

Criteria: A sports column is written from a point of view about sports or sports-related people or activities. Sports columns by a writer who does not exclusively write sports may be entered. Judging will be on effectiveness of writing, human interest and local appeal. Entries may be published in print or online.

Entries: Three columns comprise a single entry. Upload PDF files of three columns by the same staff member. More than one columnist may enter, but each columnist may submit only one entry consisting of three columns. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 19 – PHOTO SERIES

Criteria: A photo series may be spot news, feature or sports photos that are presented in a layout of two or more photos. Judging will be on subject, composition, originality and technical skill demonstrated by the photographer.

Entries: Upload a full-page PDF of each page within an entry PLUS a few high-resolution JPG files of select photos on the page. A newspaper may submit multiple entries, but each entry will contain multiple, related images.

CLASS 20 - SPOT NEWS PHOTO

Criteria: A spot news photo is a picture of an unscheduled event for which no advance planning was possible. A single photo ONLY may be entered. A single photo that was part of a picture story is eligible. Judging will be on subject, composition, originality and technical skill.

Entries: Upload a high-resolution image. An explanation of the photo may be included in the explanation/cutline box below (limited to 3,000 characters). A newspaper and/or photographer may submit multiple entries but each entry will contain a single image.

CLASS 21 - GENERAL NEWS PHOTO

Criteria: A general news photo is a picture of an event that is planned. An example would be something that has a planned start time like board meetings, a school play, etc. A single photo ONLY may be entered. A single photo that was part of a picture story is eligible. Judging will be on subject, composition, originality and technical skill demonstrated in shooting.

Entries: Upload a high-resolution image. An explanation of the photo may be included in the explanation/cutline box below (limited to 3,000 characters). A newspaper and/or photographer may submit multiple entries but each entry will contain a single image.

CLASS 22 - FEATURE PHOTO

Criteria: A feature photo is a picture of a “found” situation that has strong human interest; a fresh view of the commonplace. A single photo ONLY may be entered. A single photo that was part of a picture story is eligible. Judging will be on subject, composition, originality and technical skill.

Entries: Upload a high-resolution image. An explanation of the photo may be included in the explanation/cutline box below (limited to 3,000 characters). A newspaper and/or photographer may submit multiple entries but each entry will contain a single image.

CLASS 23 – PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY

Criteria: A portrait/personality is a photograph of a posed subject, other than sports (see class 25), used either as a stand-alone or to accompany a feature story or personality profile. A single photo ONLY may be entered. A single photo that was part of a picture story is eligible. Judging will be on composition, originality, technical skill and the ability to portray the subject’s personality to readers.

Entries: Upload a high-resolution image. An explanation of the photo may be included in the explanation/cutline box below (limited to 3,000 characters). A newspaper and/or photographer may submit multiple entries but each entry will contain a single image.

CLASS 24 - SPORTS PHOTO

Criteria: A sports photo is a single portrait, feature or action photo portraying participation in a sporting event. A single photo ONLY may be entered. A single photo that was part of a picture story is eligible. Judging will be on subject, composition, originality and technical skill.

Entries: Upload a high-resolution image. An explanation of the photo may be included in the explanation/cutline box below (limited to 3,000 characters). A newspaper and/or photographer may submit multiple entries but each entry will contain a single image.

CLASS 25 – SPORTS PHOTO – PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY

Criteria: A sports portrait/personality is a photograph of a posed subject, used either as a stand-alone or to accompany a sports feature story or personality profile. A single photo ONLY may be entered. A single photo that was part of a picture story is eligible. Judging will be on composition, originality, technical skill and the ability to portray the subject’s personality to readers.

Entries: Upload a high-resolution image. An explanation of the photo may be included in the explanation/cutline box below (limited to 3,000 characters). A newspaper and/or photographer may submit multiple entries, but each entry will contain a single image.

CLASS 26 – ONLINE PHOTO SERIES/GALLERY

Criteria: Entry should consist of a series of related photos from a single event, presented online with or without related audio. Photos must have been taken by full-time staff or a correspondent. Judged on news value, emotional appeal, composition and technical quality of individual photos, plus cohesiveness of the entire gallery. Cutlines will be considered in judging.

Entries: Include URL of the gallery in “URL” field of the online entry box. If the gallery is not still posted on your site, submit JPEGs or PDFs. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 27 – VIDEO JOURNALISM

Criteria: A journalistic video shot and edited specifically for the Web. An entry in this category may be, but is not limited to, any of the following: News, news feature, feature, sports news or sports feature. A play by-play game story may not be entered in this category.

Entries: An entry MUST include video; if it does not include video it will be disqualified. The entry may include still shots, but they are not required. The entry may not include copyrighted material, including audio, from another source without written permission from the copyright holder. Please provide a URL to your video. You may upload Flash, QuickTime, or Windows Media Format (no longer than 5 minutes), but a link to your website (or YouTube or similar video storage site) is recommended for enhanced viewing for judges. Judges will consider quality of photos and effectiveness of them; storytelling or technical quality. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 28 – DISTINGUISHED COVERAGE OF DIVERSITY

Entries: Submit up to five stories by any author, from any section of the newspaper, including editorial and opinion columns that exemplify the publication’s overall coverage of under-represented communities. Each entry should be accompanied by a nomination letter from a senior editor that explains how the entry fits the criteria (below) and describes any change or community reaction generated by the coverage.

Criteria: Accuracy, clarity and style of writing, thoroughness of treatment, originality, insight into historical, cultural and economic factors affecting relationships between communities. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 29 – INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC

Criteria: Informational graphics may stand alone or accompany a story. Entries will be judged on originality and artistry of design, clarity and ability to help interpret or enhance the content of a story.

Entries: Upload PDF of page to show how graphic was used. If necessary, upload a separate PDF or JPG of the graphic to show detail. One graphic per entry.

CLASS 30 – SINGLE PAGE DESIGN

Criteria: Entries may include news, feature, editorial, photo or sports pages. Judging will be on originality and effectiveness of typography, photography, graphics, design, headlines, story placement, etc.

Entries: Upload full-page PDF. Facing-page or double-truck designs are eligible as a single page.

CLASS 31 NEWSPAPER DESIGN

Criteria: Judging will be based on the overall presentation and readability of two **complete** editions. News content and advertising will be judged. Use of photography, information graphics, typography, headlines and subheadlines, and ad color; as well as story placement and advertisement placement; will be considered. So, too, will the execution of innovative and interesting news and advertising.

Entries: Upload PDF files of entire newspaper editions. A URL may be used in lieu of PDF file. Submit one issue from the week of June 22-28, 2025, and one from any other week of your choice. Dailies may submit issues from different days in each week, but only one Sunday/Weekend edition may be submitted. A newspaper group may submit only one entry (of two dates) unless coverage and appearance differ substantially. (See Rule 9 in general rules.) **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions**

CLASS 32 - HEADLINE WRITING

Criteria: Judging will be based on clarity, cleverness and imagination of the headline writer and whether the headline captures the essence of the story.

Entries: Upload five PDF files showing five headlines by the same writer. Include story and art that was used with the headline. Multiple entries are allowed, but each entry is composed of five headlines.

CLASS 33 - SPORTS SECTION

Criteria: Judging will be on breadth of local coverage, excellence in writing and photography, thoroughness of reporting, and appearance of page or section.

Entries: Upload PDF of one page or section from the week of Sep. 21-27, 2025, and one from any other week of your choice. Dailies may submit issues from different days in each week, but only one Sunday/ Weekend issue may be submitted. The pages will be judged as a single entry. Two publishing dates will comprise one entry. One entry per newspaper. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 34 - SPECIAL SECTION

Criteria: Special sections are sections that are not a regular part of the newspaper or produced more often than on a monthly basis. They address a single theme. ROP sections, inserts, niche publications and special editions are all eligible. Judging will be on the whole presentation including design, photography/graphics, originality of topic, newsworthiness and relevance. Preference will be given to sections with a majority of staff-oriented copy. Section must have been distributed with the newspaper or to the newspaper's mailing list but does not have to have been a full-run edition. For instance, sections sent only to subscribers or only with single-copy sales (as an insert or ROP) are eligible. Stand-alone publications not distributed as part of the newspaper are not eligible.

Entries: Upload PDF file(s) of entire section/publication. PDFs should be optimized for faster uploading and viewing by the judges.

CLASS 35 – BEST WEBSITE

Criteria: Judging is on the complete website as well as how you use the print product to drive people to the website. Judging will be based on the narrative as well as a blind date viewing of the website.

Entries: Use the explanation box to provide a statement (up to a 3,000 characters) about your website describing its usefulness to readers, ease of navigation, inclusion of special features such as links, interaction, impact in community, etc. Provide the web address in the URL field, as well. If login to the site is required, provide a login and password. Maximum one entry per newspaper. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular division.**

CLASS 36 – PUBLIC NOTICE JOURNALISM AWARD

The purpose of this competition is to recognize excellence in journalism that draws reader attention to public notices, and to encourage reporters and editors to incorporate public notice and public notice issues into their reporting and writing. For purposes of this award, public notice is defined as announcements or disclosures the law requires a governmental unit or private party to publish in a statutorily qualified newspaper. **The panel of judges will bestow one award across all divisions.**

Criteria: Entries must consist of a news story or series (not an editorial or opinion piece) initially prompted by a public notice that drew attention to the subject, or in which a public notice or the omission of a public notice figured heavily in the reporting. Stories should reference and/or provide a link to the notice; or if the story is based on a public notice requirement that was not met or was deficient, it must describe the deficiency. Editorials or opinion pieces about public notice DO NOT qualify. In addition to the story, entries that aren't about the omission or deficiency of a public notice must include a copy of the original notice that was the source or subject of the reporting.

Entries: Submit one "issue" or "subject" per entry. Enter URLs or upload full-page PDF(s). Use the explanation box to provide a statement that describes the impact of the story. Entries may be accompanied by a brief explanation (one single-spaced page or less) that provides context about the story and/or a description of its impact. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular division.

2025 ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER SPECIAL CONTEST CLASSES

CLASS 37 - Robert M. Cole Award for BEST SCHOOL BOARD COVERAGE

Sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Boards

This award, named for the first full-time Executive Director of the Illinois Association of School Boards, recognizes outstanding coverage of education issues that emphasize the community's connection with its local public school district. Entries will be judged on: (a) their contribution to public understanding of local school governance, and (b) their support for effective dialogue that helps the community and school board define major public policy issues. Judging will be on enterprise, depth of reporting and clarity of writing. Upload PDF files with articles from up to four separate topics published during the contest period. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 38 - Maurice Scott Award for BEST COVERAGE OF TAXATION

Sponsored by the Taxpayers Federation

This special award recognizes outstanding achievement in coverage of state and local taxation issues. Entries will be judged on command of subject and presentation. Command of subject includes depth, accuracy and understanding of information. Presentation includes clarity and quality of writing as well as originality. Upload PDF files with articles from up to five separate topics published during the contest period. **Newspapers will compete in two divisions, daily and non-daily. Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

CLASS 39 - BEST INVESTIGATIVE/ENTERPRISE REPORTING

Sponsored by The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation

This award will be presented for a single story or series of stories on the same subject that demonstrates enterprise, initiative and thoroughness in research and/or investigation, and the ability to convey the results to the reader both in print and online. The entry should include a statement of not more than one page in length that summarizes what preceded and followed the article or series. Special consideration will be to those entries that show sustained coverage over a period of 18 months to 2 years. **Sweepstakes points are awarded in this category; points will be applied to regular divisions.**

Upload articles published during the contest period. Include Web links in the URL field

Newspapers will compete in the following divisions:

Division A – Non-dailies

Division B – Dailies 25,000 and under

Division C – Dailies 25,001+

SWEEPSTAKES AWARDS

Winners of the Sweepstakes Awards will be selected on the basis of points (as listed below) scored in the various classes of this contest. In the event of a Sweepstakes tie, the newspaper with the most first-place plaques will be awarded the trophy.

The DAVID B. KRAMER MEMORIAL TROPHY will be awarded for editorial achievement to the outstanding weekly newspaper in Division A. It was established in 2015 by the Illinois Press Association and contributed by the Kramer family in memory of their late father and second-generation publisher of the Gibson City Courier and other Kramer weekly newspapers.

The HAROLD and EVA WHITE MEMORIAL TROPHY will be awarded for editorial achievement to the outstanding weekly newspaper in Division B. It was established in 1990 by the Illinois Press Association and contributed by Sun Publications in honor of Harold and Eva White, former publishers of Sun Publications in Naperville.

The WILL LOOMIS MEMORIAL TROPHY will be awarded for editorial achievement to the outstanding weekly newspaper in Division C. It was established in 1949 by the Illinois Press Association and contributed by the Cook County Suburban Publishers Association in memory of William W. Loomis, former publisher of the LaGrange Citizen.

The PATRICK COBURN AWARD OF EXCELLENCE will be awarded for editorial achievement to the outstanding daily newspaper in Division D. It was established in 2013 by the Illinois Press Association and contributed by Patrick Coburn, former publisher of The State Journal-Register in Springfield and vice-president of the Copley Press, Inc.

The MABEL S. SHAW MEMORIAL TROPHY will be awarded for editorial achievement to the outstanding daily newspaper in Division E. It was established in 1994 by the Illinois Press Association and contributed by the Shaw family in memory of the late publisher of The Telegraph in Dixon.

The STUART R. PADDOCK MEMORIAL TROPHY will be awarded for editorial achievement to the outstanding daily newspaper in Division F. It was established in 1978 by the Illinois Press Association and contributed by the Paddock family in memory of the late publisher of the chain of suburban newspapers.

SWEEPSTAKES TROPHY SCORING:

Points are awarded in the various contest divisions for first, second, third, and fourth place ranking as follows:

- General Excellence – 12, 10, 9, 8
- All other classes unless otherwise noted – 8, 6, 5, 4

If more than one entry from a newspaper place in a class, all places earn points toward the Sweepstakes Awards.