

WVPA EDITORIAL CONTEST

EDITORIAL RULES

1. The West Virginia Press Association's Editorial Contest is limited to West Virginia newspapers of general interest circulation and qualified associate member publications. Only WVPA members in good standing are eligible. Failure to comply with contest rules will result in automatic disqualification of entries.
2. Awards will be presented in conjunction with the WVPA's Annual Convention.
3. Newspapers will compete in the contest against other newspapers in their circulation division: Division I - Dailies over 9,001 and over, Division II - Dailies 9,000 and under, Division III - Weeklies 3,001 and over, Division IV - Weeklies 3,000 and under.

4. Circulation divisions will be based on the daily circulation number used when calculating WVPA annual dues and based on the WV Secretary of State's qualified newspaper report. Dailies will compete against dailies and weeklies will compete against weeklies. Newspapers can opt to enter a larger circulation division. All newspaper's entries, in both advertising and editorial, must be entered into the same circulation division and under the same newspaper name. Editors and Advertising Directors should coordinate the entry division.
5. In the case of morning and afternoon newspapers in the same city and under common ownership or in joint operating agreements, combined circulation determines the division, and the advertising entries are considered the product of both newspapers. Note: All newspaper's entries, in both advertising and editorial, must be entered into the same circulation division.
6. Fee: \$8 per entry; must accompany entry. Limit on entries: seven (7) for any one category.
7. **Entries using a URL must include a login and password if the website has a paywall.** Include the login and password and provide it in the explanation box for each URL entry. All entries, including special sections, should be loaded as PDF files.
8. Contest Period: Material published from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.
9. A newspaper may compete in as many categories as desired.
10. The same **individual entry CANNOT** be submitted to more than one category. For example, the same piece may not be entered in Best Feature Story and Best Written News Story. However, any story, feature article, editorial, etc. may be entered in the appropriate category, even if it's contained in entries for Best Single Issue or Best Special Section.
11. Syndicated columns are not eligible for individual awards but may be included as part of an entry for Best Single Issue or Best Special Section.
12. Awards will be made by first, second, and third place.
13. Winners of the General Excellence Award will be determined by compiling points received for first-place, second-place and third-place awards won in all other categories. (First-place

awards are worth three points; second-place, two points; third-place, one point.) No points will be given for Honorable Mention, Photo of the Year or Advertisement of the Year. Announcement of winners will be made at the annual WVPA convention.

14. It's the hope of the contest committee that there will be increased participation on the part of member newspapers. To encourage this, the committee urges that entries for writing and photography awards be on an individual rather than just a newspaper basis. The individual winners of writing and photography awards will be listed on plaques and certificates along with the name of the newspaper employing them. When there is more than one name listed for first place a first place winner, one plaque will be awarded to the newspaper listing all the names. Certificates will be issued to each person sharing in a first-place award. Try to avoid crediting "staff", if possible.

15. The complete competition shall be under the supervision of the WVPA office. Decisions of the judges selected by WVPA must be regarded as final. The West Virginia Press Association Board of Directors retains all rights and privileges in the conducting of the competition, including cancellation for cause.

EDITORIAL AWARDS JUDGING CRITERIA:

WRITING CATEGORIES

1. **BEST COVERAGE OF BREAKING NEWS:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, impact of lead, thoroughness of news reporting considering time constraints, clarity and quality of writing. Entry notes: This category is intended for news stories for which advance planning is unlikely. It excludes government meeting coverage and columns.

2. **BEST IN-DEPTH OR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING:** Judging criteria: Clarity of presentation, quality of writing, scope of the news topic, significance of the subject matter, depth and quality of research, and potential for civic change. Entry notes: An individual entry may include up to three (3) related stories as well as relevant information presented in graphic form. Editors can include a letter of up to 500 words that explains the in-depth level of reporting or document research required and the community benefit of the reporting. This category excludes columns. Newspapers may submit up to seven entries in this category.

3. **BEST GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS REPORTING:** Judging criteria: In addition to quality of writing, local appeal, impact of lead and thoroughness of reporting, judges will consider the ability of the reporter to put government affairs into meaningful perspective for citizens. Entry notes: An individual entry may include up to three (3) related stories as well as relevant information presented in graphic form. This category excludes columns. Newspapers may submit up to seven entries in this category.

4. **BEST LEGAL AFFAIRS REPORTING:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, quality of writing, with an emphasis on rendering police and court jargon into everyday English; impact of the lead; balance in reporting and sourcing. Entry notes: Entries may cover any civil or criminal court action or crime. An individual entry may include up to three (3) related stories as well as relevant information presented in graphic form. This category excludes columns. Newspapers may submit up to seven entries in this category.

5. **BEST NEWS FEATURE:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, impact of lead, clarity, creativity, quality of writing, human interest, and reporting that goes beyond the ordinary in presenting the news. Subject matter must be tied to the news of the moment. Entry notes: Sidebars that appear on the same date and in proximity to the main story may be included as part of an individual entry, with a limit of three (3) stories in an entry. This category excludes columns and articles appearing in the Sports or Lifestyle sections. Editors may include a PDF or letter of up to 500 words outlining the overall reporting effort.

6. **BEST BUSINESS, ECONOMIC OR LABOR REPORTING:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, impact of lead, thoroughness of reporting, clarity, quality of writing, with an emphasis on putting into perspective a business, economic or labor issue. Entry notes: An entry may include up to three (3) related stories on a specific business, economic or labor topic. Entries may include news features or in-depth coverage. Newspapers may submit up to seven entries in this category. We understand that some of these entries include numerous articles; however, judging requires that we limit each entry to three (3) articles.

7. **BEST EDITORIAL:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, clarity, quality of writing, significance of subject matter and persuasiveness. Entry notes: The entry must have been written by a member of the staff, whether full-time or part-time. This category excludes columns, guest commentaries and syndicated material.

8. **BEST NEWS COLUMNIST:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, clarity, quality of writing, originality, ability to place news in perspective. Entry notes: Each columnist is limited to a single entry consisting of three (3) columns written by that person. The column must be a regular, original feature of the newspaper. This category excludes columns purchased from syndicated writers and sports columns.

9. **BEST LIFESTYLES FEATURE:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, impact of lead, clarity, creativity, quality of writing, human interest, on topics addressing lifestyles and social issues. Coverage should go beyond the ordinary. Entry notes: An entry may include up to three (3) related stories, whether sidebars or parts of a series. This category excludes columns and articles appearing in the Sports section. Editors may include a PDF or letter of up to 500 words outlining the overall reporting effort.

10. **BEST LIFESTYLE COLUMNIST:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, clarity, quality of writing, originality, ability to place perspective on everyday life or a specific area of lifestyle interest. Entry notes: Each columnist is limited to a single entry consisting of three (3) columns written by that person. The column must be a regular, original feature of the newspaper. This category excludes columns purchased from syndicated writers and sports columns.

11. **BEST SPORTS EVENT REPORTING:** Judging criteria: Clarity, quality of writing, thoroughness. Subject matter must be an article covering one individual sports game, match etc. from any level of athletics. Article should help the reader experience the action, highlights, emotion and importance of the event. This category excludes columns purchased from syndicated writers.

12. **BEST SPORTS NEWS AND FEATURE REPORTING:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, impact of lead, clarity, creativity, quality of writing, human interest, and reporting that goes beyond the ordinary in presenting the news. Subject matter must be tied to the news of the moment. Entry

notes: This category excludes columns and articles appearing in the Sports or Lifestyle sections.

13. BEST SPORTS COLUMNIST: Judging criteria: Local appeal, clarity, quality of writing, originality, ability to place perspective on sporting events or issues. Entry notes: Each columnist is limited to a single entry consisting of three (3) columns written by that person. The column must be a regular, original feature of the newspaper. This category excludes columns purchased from syndicated writers.

PHOTOGRAPHY CATEGORIES — All entries must have been published. Seven entries for each photography category may be submitted.

14. NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY — Judging criteria: Interest and impact of the subject matter, composition, originality, and technical skill of the photographer. Entry notes: An entry must be a single photo of actual spot news or a general news event. A single photo published as part of a photo essay may be entered, but not if the photo essay in which it appears is also submitted for judging.

15. SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY — Judging criteria: Interest and impact of the subject matter, composition, originality, and technical skill of the photographer. Entry notes: An entry must be a single portrait, feature or action photo depicting participation in a sport. A single photo published as part of a photo essay may be entered, but not if the photo essay in which it appears is also submitted for judging.

16. FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY — Judging criteria: Ability to present subject matter in a fresh or interesting way, composition, and technical skill of the photographer. Entry notes: An entry must be a single photo published as part of a photo essay may be entered, but not if the photo essay in which it appears is also submitted for judging.

17. PHOTO ESSAY — Judging criteria: Interest and impact of the subject matter, composition, originality, technical skill of the photographer(s) and design of the photo essay. Entry notes: An entry will consist of a grouping of three or more photos that tell a visual story in a single issue. More than one photographer may be represented in the entry.

18. BEST ILLUSTRATION, CARTOON OR GRAPHIC: Judging criteria: Originality, technical quality, clarity, and ability to convey meaning whether by itself or as part of story or information package. Entry notes: Entries may include hand-drawn, computer-drawn or electronically manipulated photographic images. This category excludes clipart and syndicated work.

19. BEST VIDEO: Judging criteria: How a single video adds to the publication's overall coverage of the story and/or how well the video itself tells a story is of primary importance to the judges. Quality of the video is of secondary importance. Please provide specific URLs and include a username/password if your site has a paywall.

20. BEST PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER: Judging criteria: Interest, impact of the subject matter, composition, originality and technical skill of the photographer/videographer. Entry notes: An entry must consist of five published photos and/or videos that display the entrant's skill and ability. Newspapers may only submit one entry (of five photos) per photographer.

DESIGN CATEGORIES

21. **BEST FRONT PAGE:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, choice of content, comprehensiveness of coverage, quality of staff writing and photography, use of color, and overall appearance. Entry notes: This category is intended to reflect the quality of the content and the focus of a paper's coverage as much as the look of the page. An entry is a single front page, and a newspaper may submit up to seven entries.

22. **BEST EDITORIAL PAGE:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, presence of original (not syndicated) content, quality of staff writing, variety of perspectives, visual appeal, and service to the community. Entry notes: This category is limited to one entry per newspaper consisting of the editorial page(s) from three consecutive issues. The op-ed page(s) may be included as part of the editorial page.

23. **BEST LIFESTYLE PAGES:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, presence of original (not syndicated) content, comprehensiveness of coverage, quality of staff writing and photography, overall appearance, and service to community and specific lifestyle interests. Entry notes: An entry is a single lifestyle section, whether that consists of a single page or multiple pages. A paper may submit more than one entry.

24. **BEST SPECIAL SECTION:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, quality of local writing and photography, originality of topic, creativity in presentation, and overall appearance. Entry notes: An entry may be a separate special section, regularly published magazine insert, grouping of sections on a specific topic, or two or more pages in a regular issue devoted to special coverage of a special topic. This category is open to progress editions or similar themed sections. This category excludes sports special sections.

25. **BEST SPORTS PAGE(S):** Judging criteria: Local appeal, presence of original (not wire) content, comprehensiveness of coverage, quality of staff writing and photography, overall appearance. Entry notes: An entry is a single, regularly scheduled sports section, whether that consists of a single page or multiple pages. A paper may submit more than one entry. Papers should enter sports special sections in Sports Category 26.

26. **BEST SPORTS SPECIAL SECTION:** Judging criteria: Local appeal, quality of local writing and photography, creativity in presentation, and overall appearance. Entry notes: An entry may be a separate special section, regularly published magazine insert, grouping of sections on a specific topic, or two or more pages in a regular issue devoted to special coverage of a special topic. Papers should enter their regular sports pages in Sports Category 25.

27. **BEST HEADLINE WRITING:** Judging criteria: Accuracy, clarity, imagination, cleverness and appropriateness to story. Entry notes: Each headline writer is limited to a single entry consisting of three (3) headlines written by that person. This category is open to all sections of the paper.

28. **BEST NEWSPAPER DESIGN:** Judging criteria: Overall appearance of the entire paper, effective use of color, headlines, body type, labeling, photos, graphic information and advertising display. Entry notes: This category is limited to one entry per newspaper consisting of the complete issue from two different dates. The date of one issue is of the newspaper's choosing. The other issue must come from March 2025. Daily papers may include only one Weekend or Sunday issue.

29. **BEST SINGLE ISSUE:** Judging criteria: Appearance and quality of writing and editing of all pages with an emphasis on the use of headlines and photos on section fronts; the balance between news and features; coverage of sports, local news and lifestyles; inclusion of an editorial page; and overall local appeal. Entry notes: This category is limited to one entry per newspaper.

30. **REPORTING GENERATED FROM PUBLIC NOTICES:** Will recognize excellence in journalism that clearly demonstrates the value of public notices in keeping the public informed and/or generates reader interest in public notices and government activities. This category focuses on the role that a required public notice plays in generating articles and/or editorials and service to the public. This category is limited to three entries per newspaper. Each entry can include up to five parts, consisting of a mix of articles, editorials and illustrations. Please include a cover letter of no more than 300 words summarizing the entry.

31. **SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY:** Judging criteria: Originality, evidence of results, effort above routine coverage or involvement, overall impact on the community, quality of presentation. Entry notes: A letter of up to 400 words must be included, outlining background, efforts not apparent in the submitted pages and results. Entries can include any published materials that were a part of the service effort. Material that was published after the contest period may be included to show impact or results.

EDITORIAL CONTEST AWARDS

WVPA PHOTO OF THE YEAR: Judging criteria: There is no need to send entries for this award; the winner will be selected from the first-place winners in all photography categories, in all circulation divisions.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE: Judging criteria: There is no need to send entries for this award; Awarded to the paper in each division that compiles the most points in all categories. Three points are awarded for each first-place winner, two for each second place and one for each third. Entry notes: no separate entry necessary.

NEWSPAPER OF YEAR: Judging criteria: There is no need to send entries for this award; Awarded to the single newspaper, regardless of size, weekly or daily, that compiles the most points in the editorial and advertising contests combined.