



Fund for
Investigative
Journalism

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Kentucky lawmaker exposé honored with Peabody Award

The Fund for Investigative Journalism congratulates the **Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting** and Indiana's **WNIN Tri-State Public Media** on well-deserved honors for their important work.



PEABODY

The Kentucky team received a **Peabody Award** – broadcasting's highest accolade – for “The Pope’s Long Con,” a five-part series on “a Kentucky preacher-turned-politician’s web of lies.”

The package exposed what the center described as a series of deceptions over decades by state Rep. Dan Johnson, a self-anointed “pope, bishop and minister to outcasts.”

WNIN of Evansville, Indiana, won a **Sigma Delta Chi Award** from the Society of Professional Journalists for a yearlong investigation into a psychologist

whose evaluations are under scrutiny because of concerns that some might have been falsified.

WNIN's project, “A Scar on the System: The Case of Albert Fink,” found more than 10,000 Social Security disability claims in which the psychologist provided exams or testing.



“These award-winning investigations show just how important it is to our country to support local journalism,” **FIJ Board President Marcia Bullard** said. “FIJ is proud of the work these reporters have done. They have exposed wrongs that otherwise might have gone unnoticed. We look forward to funding even more investigations of such high caliber.”

FIJ will announce its next round of grants in June. The deadline to apply is May 7.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

Farmers facing uncertainty over land deals and sale of mineral rights

For decades, the Tennessee Valley Authority bought and traded mineral rights from energy companies in Illinois. During that time, from the 1960s into the 1980s, the TVA also signed deals with farmers who sold mineral rights and promised to sell their land if it was needed for mining. But as Kari Lydersen reports for Energy News Network, many of those families regret those deals, saying they never imagined the situation would play out as it has: landowners forced to sell their farms to companies profiting handsomely off coal.



Pat and Mark Kern could be forced to sell their farm because of a deal Mark's father signed almost four decades ago. (Photo by Kari Lydersen)

Rebecca Clarren dug through databases and tribal court files for her report, co-written with Jason Begay, on sexual discrimination, harassment and assault in tribal workplaces. Their piece for InvestigateWest, “Confronting the ‘Native Harvey Weinstens,’” which was also run by The Nation,

showed the challenges in investigating such violations. Part of the problem, Clarren and Begay report, stems from the federal government’s decision to exempt tribes from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Fewer than 20 tribes have created their own legal codes to fill this void.

The Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley, teamed with FRONTLINE to tell the story of Guatemalan teens forced to work at an Ohio egg farm. The investigation exposed a criminal network that exploits undocumented minors, companies that profit from forced labor and the role of the U.S. government. “Trafficked in America” began airing April 24 on PBS stations.

Marc Perrusquia’s new book, “A Spy In Canaan: How the FBI Used a Famous Photographer to Infiltrate the Civil Rights Movement,” (Melville House) tells how a long-running newspaper investigation uncovered civil rights photographer Ernest Withers’ double life as a paid FBI informant. The book reveals that Withers helped the FBI monitor a broad range of individuals and organizations active in the civil rights, peace and labor movements in Memphis between 1958 and 1976. That included Martin Luther King Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Communist Party, the Black Panthers, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Southern Student Organizing Committee. The Washington Post called the book “a triumph of investigative reporting.”