“Thanks for doing great work. Kentucky needs more investigative journalism. Keep it up.”

— Jessie Skaggs, Paintsville, KY
The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting is a non-profit, nonpartisan newsroom founded in 2013 by Louisville Public Media, a 501(c)3 corporation that operates three public radio stations, including 89.3 WFPL News. KyCIR works with WFPL and other news partners across the region to produce and distribute original reporting in the public interest. Our journalism affects you, your neighborhood and your commonwealth.

Our mission is to protect society’s most vulnerable citizens, expose wrongdoing in the public and private sectors, increase transparency in government and hold leaders accountable, all in accordance with journalism’s highest standards.

Many newsrooms today are facing difficult choices. Some are shrinking staff and cutting back on investigative reporting, which takes significant time and resources.

At KyCIR, we believe this in-depth reporting is critical. Our journalism shines a light on major problems in our city and state, sparks conversation and spurs solutions. We are members of our community. And our work is funded and supported by our community.
A Note From The Interim President

At Louisville Public Media, we measure impact not by clicks, but by actions. And in 2017, KyCIR’s reporting generated unprecedented impact in our community and our commonwealth.

In September, we reported that Louisville police were helping federal officials conduct immigration raids and enforce federal policy that’s well outside their purview. Within days of our story, the mayor and police chief had announced a change to this policy, and the Metro Council later approved a new ordinance preventing the practice our reporting highlighted.

At the scandal-plagued University of Louisville, KyCIR found that longtime administrators were rushing to cash in deferred compensation from an overly generous plan the school later abandoned. We also found that in its wide-ranging audit to get to the bottom of lavish spending, U of L sidestepped a state law designed to ensure transparency and allowed an outside firm to control the process, shielding it from public view. Our tough reporting on U of L in the past two years helped spark the public cleanup happening there today.

And in “The Pope’s Long Con,” we exposed state Rep. Danny Ray Johnson’s lies, false testimony and an allegation of sexual assault from a teenager who attended his church. Within hours of the story’s publication, leadership of both political parties in Kentucky called on Johnson to step down. The House Republican Caucus, of which Johnson was a member, called the story credible and echoed the call for his resignation. And Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer called for an internal review of the police department’s botched investigation of the sexual assault claim against Johnson that was first reported publicly in our story.
Two days after the story published, Johnson posted a suicide note to Facebook. He killed himself a short time later. It was a tragic outcome that no one at KyCIR could have foreseen. But, as our story showed, he rose to his position of power by avoiding oversight by society’s major institutions, including government, media and the church. We believe our reporting will help strengthen accountability in these key civic institutions going forward.

If 2017 was America’s “fake news” moment, for KyCIR it was an opportunity to educate. We launched a series of free media literacy workshops designed to help people distinguish fact from fiction online. We exposed neo-Nazis quietly trying to curry favor in an Indiana town. And we invited the public to help us build a statewide database of derelict animal shelters.

Our mission hasn’t changed at KyCIR, even as our country and our community do. We’ve been there for you, and we’ll continue to be – working on the front lines of accountability.

Sincerely,

Stephen George
Interim President

“Great work by the KY Center for Investigative Reporting for their work on ‘The Pope’s Long Con.’ That’s what prompted this donation. We MUST hold our lawmakers accountable for their misdeeds.”

— Eric Baldwin, Louisville, KY
KyCIR Staff

R.G. Dunlop | Reporter

Dunlop is a veteran investigative reporter whose work has exposed government corruption and resulted in numerous reforms in Kentucky. He has been with KyCIR since its inception.

He worked 35 years at Courier Journal in a variety of positions, including eastern Kentucky bureau chief, legal affairs reporter, city editor and state enterprise reporter. He is a three-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and was twice a member of teams that won George Polk Awards. He won a Peabody Award with KyCIR this year.

Kate Howard | Interim Managing Editor

Howard is an investigative reporter who joined the team in 2016. Her work has received a national Investigative Reporters and Editors award and numerous state and regional awards. She previously covered higher education at The Omaha World-Herald. She also reported for The Florida Times-Union and The Tennessean.

Alexandra Kanik | Data Reporter

Kanik brings the numbers to life as a data reporter for KyCIR and Louisville Public Media. She also serves on the Reader Advisory Board for MediaShift, where she worked as metrics section editor.

Kanik grew up in Pittsburgh and studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art. She began her career in journalism as interactive developer and metrics analyst with PublicSource, a nonprofit news organization in Pittsburgh.
Eleanor Klibanoff | Reporter

Klibanoff joined the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting in June 2017. She previously worked at Keystone Crossroads, a public radio project covering urban decline and recovery in the Rust Belt. She was a Kroc Fellow at NPR and a recipient of a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting grant to cover maternal healthcare in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Originally from Atlanta, Klibanoff graduated from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., with a degree in Political Communication.

Jacob Ryan | Reporter

Ryan joined the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting in December 2017. For three years prior, he worked as a WFPL News reporter and covered issues including City Hall, transportation, public safety and housing. He is a recipient of a Peabody Award, a national Investigative Reporters and Editors award, a Sidney Award from the Sidney Hillman Foundation and numerous regional and local awards.

Ryan is originally from Eddyville, Kentucky. He’s a graduate of Western Kentucky University.

“Thrilled to be able to support you. KyCIR stories are consistently outstanding! Now more than ever, we need serious investigative journalism.”

— Daniel Vivian, Lexington, KY
“What you are doing is important. Please do not stop doing this work. I am proud of you for uncovering the truth, I hope that you are too.”

— Jessica Myers

“Love the work of Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting. I really appreciate the time you all took into producing ‘The Pope’s Long Con.’ It’s great reporting! I can’t believe I wouldn’t have known about this story if it weren’t for LPM.”

— Morgan Eklund

“KyCIR is a vital and much-needed organization. Investigative journalism holds people accountable, promotes critical thinking, and hopefully will bring Kentucky into the 21st century.”

— Terri Crowe, Owensboro, KY
Our audience grew by every measure in 2017. The metrics show our readers and listeners are becoming more loyal to KyCIR and telling their friends.

**RETURNING VISITORS INCREASED BY 151%**  
**NEW VISITORS GREW BY MORE THAN 72%**

We earned this growth through stories, partnerships and community events.

Our newsroom published more than 100 articles and posts on the web in 2017. We reached thousands more listeners, too, through our radio pieces on 89.3 WFPL.

Nearly two dozen of our stories in 2017 appeared in other news outlets, including NPR, WAVE 3 News, the Lexington Herald-Leader and the Spanish-language Al Día en América.

Our journalists participated in more than 20 community events, sharing our expertise through “fake news” workshops, panels about investigative journalism and education for students of the craft.

We reached a whole new audience with our first-ever podcast. "The Pope’s Long Con" was downloaded more than 200,000 times in 2017.

That work was honored with a Peabody Award and a national Investigative Reporters and Editors award.
Kentucky changed as a result of our reporting in 2017. Our work spurred new policies, deeper scrutiny and more openness. This is a sampling of the stories that continue to reverberate in the commonwealth.

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**Louisville Police and ICE**

KyCIR’s Kate Howard learned that Louisville Metro Police officers were quietly helping immigration agents as they enforce federal law, a practice in contrast with statements from city leaders and the “compassionate city” image they project. The reporting took numerous records requests, interviews and months of work.

The results were immediate. Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer called for a review within hours of our story’s publication. The LMPD created a new policy preventing officers from joining Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents for “knock and talks,” as they had been when asked. The city passed an ordinance that made that policy permanent, and prohibits city employees from questioning people about their immigration status.

Now, if the city’s police officers assist ICE in any way, they have to disclose it to LMPD leadership – and the public.

**GOVERNMENT**

**Animal Shelters**

R.G. Dunlop collaborated with WAVE 3 News and found that Kentucky’s animal shelter system is infused with state and local politics, riven by the agendas of competing interest groups, and undermined by a lack of funding and a woefully weak animal welfare law.

Our investigation noted that amid an absence in government oversight, change largely has been spurred by the intervention of private citizens. A lawsuit filed against the state in early 2018 cited our reporting on the issue.
POLITICS

**Neo-Nazis in the Neighborhood**

As white nationalism grows nationwide, one group has its sights set on southern Indiana, Kentucky, and Appalachia. KyCIR’s Eleanor Klibanoff got an exclusive look into the Traditionalist Worker Party’s recruitment playbook as its leader was formulating his vision. She spoke to experts about what makes this region ripe for white supremacy action and the residents standing up to hate groups in their community.

EDUCATION

**Continued Scandals at U of L**

After major upheavals in 2016, last year brought some answers for the University of Louisville — along with many new problems.

With two major audits underway, Kate Howard found that longtime administrators were making a run on the bank to cash in deferred compensation from a generous plan. That plan was abandoned months later after our reporting. A long-awaited forensic investigation revealed a picture of excessive and often secret spending, but it was unclear what lessons U of L learned: as costs ballooned on the audit itself, the university sidestepped a state law meant to ensure transparency of its spending.

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

**Legal Fights Continue**

In our continued push for open government, our newsroom filed hundreds of open records requests in 2017 from local, state and federal agencies. We didn’t stop there: we also asked the attorney general to weigh in when government officials obstructed, delayed or rejected our calls for information. Nearly a dozen times, the AG ruled in our favor.
In December, we published our most ambitious project yet. “The Pope’s Long Con” was the culmination of a seven-month investigation, and the subject of our first-ever podcast. Reporters R.G. Dunlop and Jacob Ryan dug deep into the tale of lies and exaggerations spun by Danny Ray Johnson, a state representative and preacher from Bullitt County. WFPL’s Laura Ellis produced a six-part podcast. Data reporter Alexandra Kanik created a standalone web page that enabled readers to seamlessly navigate between each chapter while listening to the podcast or explore any of the thousands of pages of supporting documentation we posted.

KyCIR was named the winner of a 2017 Peabody Award, which honors the nation’s most powerful storytelling in television, radio and digital media.
Where Our Reporting Has Been Published Or Cited

Newspapers

The New York Times  Floyd County Chronicle
The Los Angeles Times  Mt. Sterling Advocate
The New York Post  The Herald-News
The Washington Post  Hart County News-Herald
The Guardian  Butler County Banner-Republican
U.S. News & World Report  The Barren County Progress
Lexington Herald-Leader  The Monroe County Citizen
Courier Journal  Salyersville Independent
The Cincinnati Enquirer  The Carroll County News-Democrat
Louisville Eccentric Observer  The Farmer’s Pride
News and Tribune (Jeffersonville, Indiana)  The Trimble Banner
The Kentucky Standard  The Lebanon Enterprise
The State-Journal  The News-Enterprise
Bowling Green Daily News  Journal-Times
The Paducah Sun  Al Día en América
The Daily Independent  The Louisville Cardinal
Grant County News  Sapulpa Daily Herald (Sapulpa, Oklahoma)
Appalachian News-Express

“Sunlight kills mold. Keep shining sunlight, KyCIR.”

— Michael Pfaff, Louisville, KY
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“The KyCIR reporting for ‘The Pope’s Long Con’ was outstanding in every respect. Reminded me of the Boston Globe’s Spotlight team. Keep up the great work.”

— Ron Rubbico, Winchester, Massachusetts
Award-Winning Journalism

PEABODY AWARD
The Peabody Award recognizes the nation’s most powerful storytelling and is considered the Pulitzer Prize of audio.

2017 Radio/Podcast – “The Pope’s Long Con”

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS & EDITORS
The country’s top investigative journalism association honors the best work in the nation.

2017 Investigative Radio – 1st Place – “The Pope’s Long Con”


2016 Investigative Radio – 1st Place – “The University Of Louisville, A Big Donor And Ownership Of An Abandoned Factory”

2015 Investigative Radio – 1st Place – “Only In Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

2015 Investigative Radio – Finalist – "Trouble Behind Bars”

EDWARD R. MURROW AWARD
The Radio Television Digital News Association honors outstanding achievements in electronic journalism.

2018 Regional Award – “Louisville Police Don’t Enforce Immigration – But Help The Feds Do It”

2017 Regional Award – “The University Of Louisville, A Big Donor And Ownership Of An Abandoned Factory”

2016 Regional Award – “Only In Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

2014 National Award – “The Man With Many Chances”

2014 Regional Award – “The Man With Many Chances”
SIDNEY AWARD

The Sidney Hillman Foundation’s national award honors the best “journalism in the service of the common good.”

January 2015 – “Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

GREEN EYESHADE

The Society of Professional Journalists’ annual Green Eyeshade Awards honor the best online, radio, print and television journalism in the southeastern United States.

2017 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place – “U of L Investigation”
2017 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 2nd Place – “Kentucky Constables”
2016 Best In Radio – “Trouble Behind Bars”
2016 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place – “Only In Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”
2016 Investigative Reporting (Online) – 2nd Place – “Kicked Out Of The Commonwealth”
2016 Public Service In Radio – 1st Place – “Trouble Behind Bars”
2015 Investigative Reporting (Online) – 1st Place – “The Congressman, His Wife and the Lobbyist”
2015 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 2nd Place – “Troubled Tiger Exhibit Puts Public’s Safety At Risk”

KENTUCKY ASSOCIATED PRESS BROADCASTERS

2017 Investigative Reporting – “Louisville Police Don’t Enforce Immigration – But Help the Feds Do It”


2016 Investigative Reporting – “U of L Foundation Bought an Empty Factory in Oklahoma — Because a Donor Asked”

2016 Investigative Reporting Finalist – “Kentucky Constables: Untrained and Unaccountable”

2015 Best Long Enterprise Reporting – “Police in Kentucky Town Ship Mentally Ill Man to Florida, Defying Judge’s Order”; “Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

2015 Best Special/Documentary – “Trouble Behind Bars”
KyCIR Advisory Council

The Advisory Council serves to provide ongoing feedback on the work produced by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting. The purpose of the council is to represent the diverse interests of the public in regular meetings with KyCIR, and to serve as ambassadors in the community.

The Advisory Council meets quarterly and reviews the program goals and significant decisions of KyCIR, and advises management on whether the newsroom is meeting the needs of the communities it serves. The role of the council is solely advisory in nature.

MEMBERS:

Molly Bingham    Stanley K. Macdonald    Stacie Shain
Bennie L. Ivory      Caroline Pieroni

Our Supporters

We aim to have a diverse set of financial backers and supporters, including community members, philanthropists and local and national foundations.

Donors have no control over our newsroom, our work or our editorial decisions. We do not accept money from political parties, political action committees, politicians or others whose donation may directly affect our independence or public perception of our operations.

Two substantial grants to LPM, earmarked for an investigative newsroom, helped establish KyCIR in mid-2013. Local businessman Ed Hart donated $250,000 and the Louisville-based C.E. & S. Foundation provided a grant of $190,000.

In 2015, the C.E. & S. Foundation pledged an additional $600,000. It is KyCIR’s largest donor.

“I am a very broke college grad who works at a deli, but we need the things you guys do so much if this country is going to have a positive future.”

— Alexander Beattie, LPM member
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Steve and Gail Zeh
Leah Zellers
Susan Zepeda and Fred Seifer
SPECIAL THANKS to Brendan McCarthy, who left KyCIR to become the deputy projects editor at the Boston Globe in early 2018. Brendan led KyCIR as its managing editor from the first day in 2013, long before anyone knew how important the new venture would become to the commonwealth.

We thank him for the tireless work, clear vision and relentless enthusiasm that made KyCIR what it is today.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Support our work and become a member
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Send us tips: 502-814-6500 | investigate@kycir.org | 619 S. 4th Street | Louisville, KY 40202

Visit us at kycir.org and sign up for our newsletter. Let us know what you think and how we can serve you better.