

From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>
Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 9:36 PM
To: 'akash@nysfocus.com'; 'lee@nysfocus.com'; 'sam@nysfocus.com';
'rebecca@nysfocus.com'; 'maia@nysfocus.com'; 'chris@nysfocus.com';
'colin@nysfocus.com'; 'spencer@nysfocus.com'; 'ross.barkan@gmail.com';
'ross@rossbarkan.com'; 'rsmith@timesunion.com'
Cc: 'sue@inn.org'
Subject: **Complaint vs New York Focus to INN for Violations of INN Membership Standards, the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, 501(c)(3) Proscriptions on Partisanship, & for Fraud**
Attachments: [6-16-23-complaint-to-inn.pdf](#)

TO: New York Focus

Editor-in-Chief Akash Mehta
Contributing Editor Lee Harris
Senior Reporter Sam Mellins
Publisher Rebecca Klein
Managing Editor Maia Hibbett
Reporters Chris Gelardi, Colin Kinniburgh, Spencer Norris
Advisors Ross Barkan, Esq. & Rex Smith

Above-attached is my complaint against New York Focus to the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), transmitted to it by the below e-mail.

Please forward to all members of your [Board of Directors](#) and such advisors or advisory board as you have.

I am available to answer questions – and look forward to your constructive response.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)
www.judgewatch.org
914-421-1200
elena@judgewatch.org

From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>
Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 7:16 PM

To: 'sue@inn.org' <sue@inn.org>

Cc: 'info@inn.org' <info@inn.org>

Subject: Complaint vs INN Members for Violations of INN Membership Standards, the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, 501(c)(3) Proscriptions on Partisanship, & for Fraud -- plus 3 Requests for Assistance Based Thereon

TO: Institute for Nonprofit News Executive Director/CEO Sue Cross

Thank you for your below e-mail, responding to mine, also below.

INN is responsible, professionally, civically, and legally, for ensuring compliance by its members with the standards to which it proclaims they adhere. As stated unequivocally on your ["Membership Standards" webpage](#):

"Newsrooms in the INN network uphold standards that represent a promise of editorial excellence, ethical behavior and transparency about their funding and practices...

The public can be assured that INN member news organizations have met...standards..."
(underlining added).

After you have reviewed the above-attached complaint, I trust you will agree – and that you will present it to the [INN Standards Task Force](#), of which you are the liaison, and the [Board of Directors](#), so as to develop appropriate procedures for handling it.

As for my own communications with your ten complained-against member organizations – and with an eleventh, described in the complaint – they are unavailing. Your INN members do not respond to me and simply persist in their violative conduct.

Upon e-mailing the complaint to the eleven, which I will begin to do shortly, I will include you as a cc – and all the transmitting e-mails will be posted on the webpage I have created for this complaint on CJA's website, [here](#). That is where I will also post their responses and yours, when received, consistent with the INN standard of "transparency".

My complaint also presents three requests for assistance based thereon – and all three requests are in furtherance of INN's goal of ensuring "access to trustworthy sources of news", "holding the powerful accountable and strengthening democracy".

I look forward to discussing all of the foregoing with you directly.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)
www.judgewatch.org
914-421-1200
elena@judgewatch.org

From: Sue Cross <sue@inn.org>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 5:29 PM

To: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>

Cc: info@inn.org

Subject: Re: Query: INN's procedures for complaints against its members for violations of INN standards & of 501(c)(3) proscriptions on partisanship

Hi Elena --

We do not have such a process and do not get involved in our members' editorial decisions; we are a support organization helping them build sustainability around their reporting.

I'd recommend you address your complaint and detail your concerns directly with the news outlet. If you believe the organization has fallen outside of the IRS guidelines on nonpartisanship, would include why you believe that is a concern in your communications with the news outlet. You're welcome to copy INN in. We would not likely get involved but we are of course interested in journalism standards.

Thanks,

Sue

On Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 2:03 PM Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org> wrote:

TO: [Institute for NonProfit News \(INN\)](#)

This follows the voice mail message I left nearly 3 hours ago at 818-582-3560.

I have not found any information on your website about procedures for filing complaints against INN members for violations of [INN standards](#) and of 501(c)(3) proscriptions on partisanship. Are there posted procedures and if not, what are the procedures?

I have drafted a complaint, which I have addressed to Executive Director/CEO Sue Cross. Is there anyone else who should be cc'd?

Please advise.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director
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