

BRANDON SMITH

Press freedom advocate, FOIA expert, and journalist with 11 years of experience.

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Nation Investigative Fund. Washington, DC Oct 2017–Present

- Report an original series on a national security policy, managing disparate stakeholders. These include the foundation that supplied funding, a publication partner, and sources for whom anonymity is paramount.
- Closely monitor policy regarding media source protection and shield laws.

Propublica Illinois. Chicago, IL Aug 2017–Present

- Coordinate members of volunteer team for several public records-based projects, including review of large documents obtained via FOIA, and development of a database on a pattern of corruption. The projects detail police abuse of the public trust over a span of eight years.
- Prepare for potential FOIA litigation, as one project in particular involves several agencies unwilling to follow the letter of FOIA law.

The Capitol Forum. Washington, DC Feb–July 2017

An investigative newsletter read by regulators. Correspondent / FOIA expert.

- Uncovered evidence of public companies behaving in ways that likely violate laws or rules, or could otherwise land them with government sanctions or lawsuits.
- Provided FOIA expertise and wrote the organization's request boilerplate from DOJ OIP guidelines that serve to teach FOIA officers which information should be protected, redacted, or disclosed.
- Taught bar association-compliant courses for attorneys in the U.S. and Europe about the most misused FOIA exemptions that stifle transparency.

Independent Journalism, Freelance. Chicago, IL July 2012–Jan 2017

- Filed a successful FOIA lawsuit to expose the cover-up of the killing of teen Laquan McDonald. This resulted in the ouster of Chicago's police chief and what the U.S. DOJ called the largest civil rights investigation it had ever undertaken.
- Acted as point of contact for local and national media, activists, and attorneys to fact-check specifics on press freedoms and open government, and seek comment promoting the same.
- Met with several members of Congress and their office staff, following litigation and a series of columns, to discuss police interaction and constituent concerns.
- Published articles in the following outlets: The Chicago Tribune, The Guardian (US & UK), The Daily Beast, Al Jazeera America, In These Times magazine, The Chicago Reader, Green Building & Design.

- Selected as a McCormick Fellow at the New England Center for Investigative Reporting. Studied and reported on the Affordable Care Act and its implementation.

Springfield News-Sun. Springfield, OH June 2011–June 2012
General assignment reporter. Wrote content for website and print on corporate pollution, public health crises, school lunch nutrition, and government transparency. Assisted the 17-county, print-and-television teams on two investigations. Monitored state legislation and administrative policy to predict outcomes for a series on opiates.

Wilmington News-Journal. Wilmington, OH May 2008–Aug 2009
Editorial assistant and contributing writer. Wrote original investigative projects and reported on state and local meetings of public bodies, their deliberation, and outcomes.

Record-Herald. Washington Court House, OH May 2006–Aug 2007
Editorial Assistant. Reported, photographed, and wrote breaking news, feature stories, columns, viewpoints, and editorials.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Ithaca College Park Center for Independent Media, 2016
Izzy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Independent Media

Freedom of the Press Foundation, 2016
Transparency for Police Fund Award

National Lawyers Guild, 2016
People's Law Award

Associated Press Society of Ohio, 2011
Second place winner for Investigative Reporting

Brown Publishing Company, 2007
First place winner for Editorial Writing

EDUCATION

Columbia College Chicago. Chicago, IL Aug 2009–May 2011
Pursued Bachelor of Arts in Science Journalism

Cedarville University. Cedarville, OH Aug 2007–May 2009
Pursued Bachelor of Arts in Communications