

From: Karen Rundlet <karen@investigativenewsnetwork.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2024 7:02 PM
To: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)
Subject: **Complaint vs INN's Exec. Director/CEO, "Leadership Team", & "Management & Staff" for Abetting Fraud & Violations of Standards by INN Members, including 501(c)(3) Proscriptions on Partisanship, & Ignoring 3 Requests for Assistance Based Thereon**

Dear Ms. Sassower,

Thank you for the outreach.

The Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) is a membership organization that exists to help news outlets in the INN network become more financially sustainable. To become members, applicants must meet INN's [membership standards](#) around editorial excellence and independence, as well as financial transparency.

INN does not exercise control over a member outlet's editorial decisions. How and what a newsroom reports is the purview of that newsroom: that is the very essence of editorial independence. This response will be shared with INN's Board of Directors and INN's Senior Team.

Sincerely,

K. Rundlet

On Tue, Oct 15, 2024 at 7:13 AM Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org> wrote:

TO: [Institute for Non-Profit News Board of Directors](#)
ATT: [Ron Smith](#), [Graciela Mochkofsky](#), [Mark Horvit](#), [John Adams](#),
[Brant Houston](#)

[Institute for Non-Profit News Standards Task Force & Advisory Groups](#)
ATT: [Sanjay Jolly, Esq.](#), [Maud Beelman](#), [Jeff Kelly Lowenstein](#),
[Carroll Bogert](#), [Lorie Hearn](#), [Torres McNelly](#)

I am director and co-founder of the non-partisan, non-profit citizens' organization [Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. \(CJA\)](#).

This is a complaint against [INN's Executive Director/CEO Karen Rundlet](#), "[Leadership Team](#)", and "[Management & Staff](#)" for ignoring, *without response*, my below September 19, 2024 e-mail entitled "STATUS? – [June 16, 2023] 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" and my accompanying two e-mails further substantiating it to which they were cc'd, *to wit*,

- my [September 19, 2024 e-mail to INN member New York Focus](#) entitled "INFORMING THE VOTERS: NY's Most Important D.A. Race, for Albany D.A., Upending NY's 13 Other D.A. Races, 213 State Legislative Races, & Judicial Races", stating:

“If you are not planning to investigate and report the below-recited, fully-documented, major story about the D.A. candidates in the ALL-IMPORTANT Albany County D.A. race, please advise why and IMMEDIATELY forward this e-mail to ALL members of your [Board of Directors](#) so that they can be apprised of the situation and direct you consistent with [New York Focus](#)' stated mission and status as a nonprofit news organization, receiving public and philanthropic contributions and tax-exemptions.

Meantime, I am cc'ing INN by way of follow-up and supplement to my June 16, 2023 complaint.”

- my [September 20, 2024 e-mail to INN member Investigative Post](#) entitled "RECTIFYING your NON-EXISTENT investigative reporting & NO REPORTING of the D.A., state legislative, and judicial races in the 'Western New York' counties of your coverage", stating:

“If, based on this e-mail, you are not planning to investigate and report on this fully documented, public corruption story impacting on ALL the 2024 races within “Buffalo and Western New York” for D.A.s, state legislative seats, and for judgeships from supreme court down to city court, please advise why and IMMEDIATELY forward this e-mail to ALL members of your [Board of Directors](#) so that they can be apprised of the situation and direct you, consistent with [Investigative Post](#)'s mission and status as a nonprofit news organization, receiving public and philanthropic support and tax exemptions.

In the event you did not previously furnish the Board members with my [June 16, 2023 complaint](#) against the [Investigative Post](#) to the [Institute for Public News \(INN\)](#), as my [transmitting July 17, 2023 e-mail](#) to you had requested, the links are now furnished so that Board members will conveniently have both. I had not record of any response from you or them to the complaint, with its substantiating [four linked "Case Studies"](#) of the [Investigative Post](#).

Meantime, I am cc'ing INN by way of follow-up and supplement to the June 16, 2023 complaint."

The only response I received to these two substantiating e-mails was a [September 23, 2024 e-mail](#) from [Investigative Post Executive Director Jim Heaney](#), stating, without any indicated cc to INN:

"You seem unhinged. Save yourself the trouble and stop emailing me."

Please ensure this e-mail is forwarded to [INN's Board of Directors Chair Marcia Parker, Vice Chair Kinsey Wilson, all other Board members](#), and all relevant members of [INN's Standards Task Force & Advisory Groups](#) – and advise, as immediately as possible, as to how you will be handling this complaint against Executive Director/CEO Rundlet, the "Leadership Team" and "Management & Staff" for reducing to "window-dressing" INN's membership standards by ignoring my below September 19, 2024 e-mail, my underlying June 16, 2024 complaint against INN members, and my three requests for assistance.

Meantime, I am cc'ing Executive Director/CEO Rundlet, the "Leadership Team" and "Management & Staff" so that they can be heard by way of explanation and rebuttal, if they have any.

For the convenience of all – and in keeping with the ["transparency" that is one of INN's membership standards](#) – CJA's webpage for the June 16, 2023 complaint and September 19, 2024 supplement is [here](#).

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: Thursday, September 19, 2024 2:58 PM

To: 'karen@inn.org' <karen@inn.org>; 'lisa@inn.org' <lisa@inn.org>; 'courtney@inn.org' <courtney@inn.org>; 'jonathan@inn.org' <jonathan@inn.org>; 'soraya@inn.org' <soraya@inn.org>; 'sharene@inn.org' <sharene@inn.org>; 'sam@inn.org' <sam@inn.org>; 'devon@inn.org' <devon@inn.org>; 'kemuel@inn.org' <kemuel@inn.org>; 'andrew@inn.org' <andrew@inn.org>; 'hope@inn.org' <hope@inn.org>; 'bia@inn.org' <bia@inn.org>; 'chip@inn.org' <chip@inn.org>; 'cynthia@inn.org' <cynthia@inn.org>; 'alana@inn.org' <alana@inn.org>; 'emily@inn.org' <emily@inn.org>; 'stephanie@inn.org' <stephanie@inn.org>; 'jordan@inn.org' <jordan@inn.org>; 'meta@inn.org' <meta@inn.org>; 'ha@inn.org' <ha@inn.org>; 'jasmyne@inn.org' <jasmyne@inn.org>; 'info@inn.org' <info@inn.org>

Subject: STATUS? -- 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 – Leadership Team, Management & Staff](#)

ATT: Karen Rundlet, Executive Director & CEO

I am director and co-founder of the non-partisan, non-profit citizens' organization [Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. \(CJA\)](#) – and have no record of response from INN to my below June 16, 2023 e-mail to your predecessor Executive Director/CEO Susan Cross, with its above-attached complaint and three requests for assistance based thereon.

What do your records show? Did INN respond?

Please advise, as immediately as possible. The situation is precisely as it was 15 months ago – DIRE.

In substantiation, and in further support of the complaint and its requests for assistance, I will be cc'ing you on an e-mail that I am about to send to [New York Focus](#) pertaining to the corruption of New York state governance and the upcoming New York elections for 14 D.A.s, 213 state legislative seats, and judgeships. On the same topic, I will cc you on an e-mail I will be sending to the [Investigative Post](#). By the way, did either of these two INN members, or the other eight INN members that are the subject of my [June 16, 2023 complaint](#), furnish INN with responses? I received nothing – and [CJA's webpage for the complaint](#) so-reflects.

I am available to answer questions – and look forward to directly speaking with you and others at INN about the reality of how your members operate, apparently confident that they will not be held to account.

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

Cc: 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 “transparencey”.

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