

BASIC STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Adopted in Philadelphia, October 10, 1975 for the National Conference of Editorial Writers

Editorial writing is more than another way of making money. It is a profession devoted to the public welfare and to public service. The chief duty of its practitioners is to provide the information and guidance toward sound judgments that are essential to the healthy functioning of a democracy. Therefore editorial writers owe it to their integrity and that of their profession to observe the following injunctions:

- 1.** The editorial writer should present facts honestly and fully. It is dishonest to base an editorial on half-truth. The writer should never knowingly mislead the reader, misrepresent a situation, or place any person in a false light. No consequential error should go uncorrected.
- 2.** The editorial writer should draw fair conclusions from the stated facts, basing them upon the weight of evidence and upon the writer's considered concept of the public good.
- 3.** The editorial writer should never use his or her influence to seek personal favors of any kind. Gifts of value, free travel and other favors that can compromise integrity, or appear to do so, should not be accepted.
 - The writer should be constantly alert to conflicts of interest, real or apparent, including those that may arise from financial holdings, secondary employment, holding public office or involvement in political, civic, or other organizations. Timely public disclosure can minimize suspicion.
 - Editors should seek to hold syndicates to these standards.
 - The writer, further to enhance editorial-page credibility, also should encourage the institution he or she represents to avoid conflicts of interest, real or apparent.
- 4.** The editorial writer should realize that the public will appreciate more the value of the First Amendment if others are accorded an opportunity for expression. Therefore, voice should be given to diverse opinions, edited faithfully to reflect stated views. Targets of criticism - whether in a letter, editorial cartoon or signed column - especially deserve an opportunity to respond; editors should insist that syndicates adhere to this standard.
- 5.** The editorial writer should regularly review his or her conclusions. The writer should not hesitate to consider new information and to revise conclusions. When changes of viewpoint are substantial, readers should be informed.
- 6.** The editorial writer should have the courage of well-founded convictions and should never write anything that goes against his or her conscience. Many editorial pages are products of more than one mind, and sound collective judgment can be achieved only through sound individual judgments. Thoughtful individual opinions should be respected.
- 7.** The editorial writer always should honor pledges of confidentiality. Such pledges should be made only to serve the public's need for information.
- 8.** The editorial writer always should discourage publication of editorials prepared by an outside writing service and presented as the newspaper's own. Failure to disclose the source of such editorials is unethical, and particularly reprehensible when the service is in the employ of a special interest.
- 9.** The editorial writer should encourage thoughtful criticism of the press, especially within the profession, and promote adherence to the standards set forth in this statement of principles.