

# Baker Family Public Service Journalism Award

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## **1<sup>st</sup> Place- Noelle Crombie and Mike Rogoway of The Oregonian.**

The Oregonian/OregonLive launched an investigation after a tip about a secretive court case involving sexual abuse allegations against a major Oregon CEO, later identified as Douglas Pitassi of Pacific Office Automation. Reporters Noelle Crombie and Mike Rogoway uncovered decades of alleged misconduct, including a toxic workplace culture, buried criminal history, and secret payouts to silence victims. Their reporting relied on public records, interviews, archives, and body-worn police footage—leading to national attention and significant fallout, including Pitassi's removal and severed business ties. The series brought long-overdue validation to Pitassi's earlier victims and sparked widespread public and institutional response.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Place- Eliza Aronson & The Eugene Weekly**

Eugene Weekly reporter Eliza Aronson uncovered a series of student druggings at University of Oregon fraternity parties in early 2024 that university officials failed to report, in violation of federal law and their own policies. Through public records requests, interviews, and internal documents, Aronson revealed that UO administrators withheld evidence, altered records, misled the public, and failed to warn students, as required under the Clery Act. Her reporting directly led to the resignation of a top university official, a federal inquiry, and major policy reforms including timely safety alerts and stricter oversight of fraternity events. Ultimately, the university admitted her investigation spurred necessary changes to protect student safety and transparency going forward.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Leslie Thompson & The Argus Observer-**

After a use-of-force incident involving Ontario Police came to light, a reporter requested body camera footage and related records from the police chief, who refused to release the video, citing a lack of redaction software. Despite promises to release all records after the investigation, the city withheld the footage until the reporter filed a petition with the Malheur County District Attorney, who ruled in favor of disclosure. The DA found the footage was clearly in the public interest and said the city's excuse for withholding it was invalid, leading to the video's release without redaction. As a direct result, the city began pursuing redaction software, ultimately approving a \$250,000 investment to comply with future public records requests.