

In these times when journalists are disrespected, condemned, ridiculed, assaulted and constantly face layoffs, pay cuts and worse, let it be known that we honor and support journalists and journalism. Keep at it. Your work is important to the people and essential to democracy itself. - Roger Summers

\* In the days of hot type, a chaser was a late edition of the newspaper for which the presses were not stopped until the plates were ready. Those pages were said to be "chasing" a running press.

INFORMING THE NORTH TEXAS JOURNALISM / COMMUNICATOR WORKFORCE





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- [While First Amendment champions work for a free press, others undermine](#)

Next at [Fort Worth SPJ](#) ... updates on the [homepage](#) and [Facebook page](#)

## No joke: 10 days in Aggieland yield empty journalism chair, president's resignation

July 11-21 — the timeline of the hiring controversy surrounding Texas A&M's revived journalism program — are 10 days the Aggie faithful likely would rather forget.

In June the university announced in a ballyhooed signing ceremony that former New York Times journalist **Kathleen McElroy**, an A&M alumna and former director (2018-2022) of the UT Austin School of Journalism, had been hired away from UT to revive A&M's journalism program. But A&M System leaders were said to be voicing objections. Dr. McElroy is known for her work related to equity issues and diversity in newsrooms, according to The Texas Tribune.



**Department head says Banks misled faculty and public, claims forged signature on McElroy offer**  
 — THE BATTALION, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

By July 11, McElroy had rejected A&M's final contract proposal after offers that reportedly began with a tenured professorship, then sank to a five-year contract without tenure, and ended with an at-will, one-year contract that could be terminated at any time.

Her decision, McElroy said, came after Dr. **José Luis Bermúdez**, A&M's interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, warned her that some people were against her and that, "even if he hired me, these people could make him fire me ... that the president and the chancellor, no one can stop that from happening."

On July 17, Bermúdez, citing the controversy surrounding McElroy's negotiations, announced [he will leave the interim post](#) at the end of July.

On July 20, President **M. Katherine Banks** abruptly resigned, citing the "recent challenges regarding Dr. McElroy" and the "negative press" stemming from the university's botched efforts to hire her. Banks has a mercurial history with A&M journalism. In February 2022 [she faced backlash when she decreed an end to The Battalion's print editions](#). Seven months later she [announced the revival of the journalism program](#), which the university had dropped in 2004, as part of her vision for "transformational education" at A&M.

On July 21 the university announced the appointment of **Mark A. Welsh III**, dean of the School of Government and Public Service, as acting president. The Faculty Senate said it would [launch an investigation into the "mishandling" and "flawed hiring process"](#) of the negotiations.

The A&M situation somewhat parallels the 2021 uproar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill when The New York Times Magazine's **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, lead author of the magazine's 1619 Project, declined to become the university's Knight chair in race and investigative journalism after trustees delayed a tenure decision. Tenure was ultimately approved by a split vote, but Hannah-Jones opted to accept a tenured post at Howard University, a historically black school.

— Robert Bohler

[more eChaser on p. 2](#)

BIG-TIME SUPPORTER












QUICK HITS

- Arlington Conservation Council monthly Zoomer (recorded), "Effects of Drought and Winter on Trees," with **Kimberlee Peterson**, Texas A&M Forest Service — 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 2 ([Z-link](#)).
- GFW PRSA professional development meeting, "PR Pitch Shark Tank: 60-second Story Pitches," with **Omar Villafranca**, CBS News; **Tawnell D. Hobbs**, The Wall Street Journal; **Mireya Villarreal**, ABC News — 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 2, Texas Wesleyan University (Lou's Place). [Info](#). Worthy Awards entry deadlines Aug. 11 and Sept. 1, capped by 10th annual ceremony Friday, Nov. 3, Fort Worth Zoo. [Info](#).
- FWBG | BRIT — Florigami in the Garden, Aug. 19-Feb. 14; Cacti and Succulents 101, Aug. 19; AgriLife Series: Berry Mocktails, Aug.23; BRIT Reads Book Club: "Nature's Best Hope," Aug. 21; Drawing the Garden: Perennial Garden, Aug. 5. [Info](#).



GET A JOB. *Listings in [journalismjobs.com](#) may add to this report.* ... HoustonPublicMedia.org seeks a digital content producer. Full-time contract position. Houston Public Media is Houston's NPR/PBS affiliate and is licensed to the University of Houston. [Info](#). ... Numerous openings this month in San Antonio — [trending reporter](#), [San Antonio Express-News](#), pitch and write 3-5 short stories a day to be posted on [expressnews.com](#); [digital reporter](#), [Hearst property MySA.com](#), quickly turn time-sensitive stories for a diverse South Texas audience, especially travelers to the area; [trending food reporter](#), [MySA.com](#), "chase and write stories that highlight San Antonio's diverse, vibrant food scene and dig up unique angles ... "



Chris Cobler, left, and Gabe Arana

## Working together: It's just better

Nonprofit news organizations' funding search may be never-ending in a fragmented news media landscape, say leaders of Fort Worth Report and the Texas Observer, but collaborations — not competition — are key to surviving and serving broader audiences.

FWR publisher/CEO **Chris Cobler**, a Fort Worth SPJ board member, and Texas Observer editor-in-chief **Gabe Arana** told SPJ members at Joe T. Garcia's restaurant in May that collaborations enable sharing content with more diverse audiences.

The Texas Observer, which recently raised more than \$350,000 through a GoFundMe account to stave off its closure by the parent Texas Democracy Foundation, has partnered with the International Center for Journalists in covering social and political issues enveloping the U.S.-Mexico border, Arana said. ICJ provides Spanish translations of the Observer's coverage, which Arana said has greatly expanded the impact of the reporting.

Cobler said the Report's partnerships with KERA and The Texas Tribune create a stronger product for their core audiences and boost exposure. Likewise, he said, KERA's acquisition of the Denton Record-Chronicle will give its readers expanded North Texas news coverage.

From the [Institute for Nonprofit News](#) and [Pew Charitable Trusts](#):

- 40% of U.S. nonprofit news organizations are local, up from 20% in 2017
- local news sites were nearly two-thirds (65%) of launches in 2021; local startups in the West and the Southeast doubled in 2020-2022
- more than a third of nonprofits serve markets with populations under 100,000
- 25% of local nonprofit news outlets are likely to list coverage of communities of color as a primary mission
- local news nonprofits are in 28 states and the District of Columbia
- two-thirds of local nonprofit news outlets generate less than \$500,000 a year, and median revenue was \$257,000 in 2020
- statehouse reporters working for nonprofits in 2022 nearly quadrupled since 2014, from 92 to 353
- of the 80 nonprofits identified as covering statehouses, nearly half (39) were founded within the past five years; about a third of them (27 of 80) employ three or more full-time statehouse reporters, and the majority (56 of 80) have at least one full-time statehouse reporter
- nonprofit outlets average 2.3 full-time statehouse reporters, compared to 1.3 at newspapers and 0.9 each at TV and radio outlets

— Robert Bohler

**PEOPLE & PLACES** Community leaders will explore steps to a robust infrastructure supporting childhood learning and development at a panel/Q&A Wednesday, Aug. 16, 7:30-9 a.m. on the Texas Wesleyan campus, Nick and Lou Martin University Center. Participants include moderator **Kara Waddell**, president and CEO of Child Care Associates; **Rose Bradshaw**, CEO of the North Texas Community Foundation; **Shawneequa Blount**, director of child care innovation at the Institute to Advance Child Care; **Sara Redington**, chief philanthropy officer at the Miles Foundation; and PNC Bank senior VP **Amber Scanlan**. Breakfast will be served starting at 7:30, with the program beginning at 8. [More here](#).

### POWER TO THE PEOPLE

[Here's what happens when scammers get AI](#)

[What Paxton impeachment crisis has in common with Texas' only removal](#)

[Unsolicited covid-19 test kits sent to residents prompt fraud concerns](#)

[Texas insurance going up as companies can increase prices immediately](#)

[A Watchdog open letter to Greg Abbott on electricity rates](#)

[Death, flood and a scam: McKinney woman's life turned upside down](#)

[Former Dallas Mayor Miller runs into brick wall helping ex-homeless man](#)

[more eChaser on p. 3](#)



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# VITAL READS: Near and National

## POLITIFACT (PANTS ON FIRE!)

Trump was 'fine with affirmative action' in 2015 interview but has worked against it since || What is generative AI, and why is it suddenly everywhere? || How misleading migrants became a business || A pro-DeSantis ad used AI to create Trump's voice. Expect to see more of this || Supreme Court ended affirmative action for colleges. Are legacy admissions next to go?

## Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Trans kids are already at risk of suicide. How will new rules in Texas affect them? || 16,000 signatures on Keller teacher's petition to reverse policy on bathrooms, pronoun use || Why did Jerry Jones give Clarence Thomas a Super Bowl ring? || Supreme Court strikes down Biden plan to forgive millions of student loans

## Fort Worth Report

\$2 million over 3 years: Report cites pressing needs for T&P Warehouse || Could Jane Justin School be model for special education? || New federal light bulb regs could hit low-income residents || 'They treat you like family': Fort Worth congregations house the homeless || Racial controversy over 1930s Will Rogers mural had potential to divide. Instead, FW finds 'exceptionally impressive' solution

## FORT WORTH BUSINESS PRESS THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Blocking student loan forgiveness could impact nearly 1.4 million Texans || It's a long shot: Dem proposal gives renters property tax relief || Property tax special session is over, but months of acrimony could complicate lawmakers' mission || Tweet no more — the Twitter bird is now an X

## Fort Worth Weekly

Reconciling the Past: New TCU Press book documents the private university's uneven relationship with black students || No Room to Breathe: Many residents of one River Oaks retirement complex suffer from assorted health problems due to alleged neglect || City intends to fight atheists' First Amendment lawsuit

## TEXAS OBSERVER

DPS data: Texas sets hate crimes record || Abbott bans mandatory water breaks || Pipeline operators release or flare tons of gas during June heat wave || Teachers strong-armed to get on board with Houston schools takeover || Homegrown neo-fascist movement marches in Austin || Texas wastes renewable energy during June heat wave

## TEXAS STANDARD THE NATIONAL DAILY NEWS SHOW OF TEXAS

Inmates are dying in stifling Texas prisons, but the state seldom acknowledges heat as a cause of death || Texas program pushes drivers to pay old tickets – and over 600,000 have lost their licenses || Refugees feel abandoned after Texas resettlement agency closes || Justice Department to sue Texas over Abbott's Rio Grande floating wall, razor wire



More pictures (that I can't get too much of) from the 20th Annual First Amendment Awards and Scholarship Banquet at the Texas Rangers Golf Club in April. All smiles: **Mark Smith**, WFAA-TV; **Haley Samsel** and **Rachel Behrndt**, Fort Worth Report. **Stacy Luecker** photos.

OVER & OUT | [John Dycus](#), Fort Worth SPJ

Congratulations to make-it-happen businesswoman **Jennifer Henderson** on her J.O. Agency hitting an impressive 25 years. J.O. has always struck me as the heartbeat of Fort Worth Near Southside, a transformative entrepreneurial/philanthropic/charitable force for good in so many forms. "Every day has a new story," Jennifer says, "and when I wake up, I look forward to seeing it play out." Hard to fault that.



**SPJ factoids:** Workers at St. Louis Public Radio created the St. Louis Public Radio Guild, Missouri's first public radio union. (Twitter) [here](#)

The National Trust for Local News plans to assume ownership of five of Maine's six daily newspapers. A landmark deal, it could help preserve local news across the state. (Portland Press Herald) [here](#)

More layoffs. National Geographic laid off its last remaining staff writers June 29. (CNN) [here](#) ESPN is laying off around 20 high-profile sports commentators. (CNN) [here](#)

**Caught my eye:** [This startup sees balloons snaring CO2 miles above ground](#)

**Closing words** [with gratitude to **Garrison Keillor** and Prairie Home Productions]: "Better than anyone else, he told the truth about his time. He was a professional. He wrote honestly and well." — **John O'Hara's** epitaph, which he wrote ... "I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me." — playwright **Noel Coward**

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## Cowcatcher Magazine

All about the community of model railroading and rail enthusiasm in the Midwest and Southwest



"There is no greater agony than carrying an untold story." — Maya Angelou

UNSUNG: REMEMBERING JEWELL HOUSE



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