

## **The Tribune-Democrat Newsroom Code of Ethics**

### **Honest and balanced reporting: treating all sources fairly while producing accurate and complete news content**

Journalists at The Tribune-Democrat will:

- test the accuracy of information obtained from sources, use multiple sources even for simple stories and strive to avoid inadvertent errors.
- diligently seek out subjects of stories and allow them to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- identify sources. The only exceptions: When there is no other way to obtain information central to a crucial story for our readers, and only after a conversation with and approval from the editor. And in those rare cases, we will explain to readers why we've used an unidentified source.
- strive to avoid misrepresentation in all areas of coverage, including photos, captions, headlines, graphics, teasers and quotations.
- avoid surreptitious means of gathering information, except when traditional methods do not yield information vital to the public.
- avoid plagiarism, or unauthorized use, of either words or images.
- avoid stereotyping.
- support the open exchange of views, even those we find troubling or with which we disagree.
- distinguish between advocacy and news reporting, and clearly label commentary as such. That would include news analysis stories that do not necessarily appear on the Editorial page.
- distinguish news from advertising and shun blurring of the lines between the two.
- strive to avoid altering the news by our presence.
- pursue and support the open conduct of public business, and the opening of government records to the public.

### **Independence: remaining free of obligation to sources or newsmakers**

Journalists at The Tribune-Democrat will:

- avoid conflicts of interest, both real and perceived.
- refuse personal gifts of a more than token value, generally about \$20.
- refuse any gifts that might compromise integrity.
- disclose unavoidable conflicts (financial investments, family connections).
- shun political involvement, including participation in demonstrations.
- not hold public office or donate to political campaigns.
- be encouraged to vote.
- avoid community service when doing so would compromise integrity.
- deny favorable treatment to advertisers.
- not write letters to the editor.

- avoid signing petitions when doing so would compromise integrity.
- not do public relations work, even unpaid, for another organization.

### **Respect of sources and the community: sensitivity, accountability, pandering, privacy, legal issues**

Journalists at The Tribune-Democrat will:

- be diligent in serving as a watchdog over government.
- be diligent in protecting the community.
- report on suicides only if the actor is a public figure, or if the act happens in a public place or manner.
- be cautious and thoughtful before identifying children as crime victims.
- strive to avoid identifying victims of rape or sexual assault.
- avoid pandering to prurient interests.
- report on suspects only after charges have been filed, except in rare circumstances that will require the approval of the editor.
- be fair in reporting on civil lawsuits, and stress to readers that a civil complaint tells only one side of a situation.
- respect an individual's right to privacy.
- work within the legal limits of libel law.
- publish corrections and clarifications quickly and prominently.

### **Photojournalism: ethical issues dealing specifically with visual content**

Photojournalists at The Tribune-Democrat will:

- avoid the staging of photographs.
- avoid re-creations of events.
- produce documentary photography.
- clearly label photo illustrations as such.
- not alter image content, other than adjustments for color and clarity.
- abide by general rules of ethics for the news department.

The Tribune-Democrat will:

- use submitted photographs as available and necessary, and label them as such.
- use mug shots, including submitted photos, of newsworthy individuals.
- not select mug shots to make subjects look guilty, shifty, angry, etc.