

# THE WALTER CRONKITE AWARD

for excellence in television political journalism



**Contacts:** **Veronica Jauriqui**  
USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center  
(213) 821-1284 | [jauriqui@usc.edu](mailto:jauriqui@usc.edu)

**Michael L. Rozansky**  
Annenberg Public Policy Center  
(215) 746-0202 | [mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu)

## 2015 WALTER CRONKITE AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN TELEVISION POLITICAL JOURNALISM GO TO DENVER, AUSTIN, NEW ORLEANS, SAN DIEGO, MILWAUKEE

*National Honors to Hearst TV & Investigative Journalists at Univision and CNBC.com*

LOS ANGELES, March 10, 2015 – Compelling storytelling, accuracy and service to citizens in 2014 election coverage have been recognized by the Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Television Political Journalism. The awards, given biennially since 2000, are named for the distinguished journalist and longtime CBS anchor. Winners were announced today by the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

### LOCAL STATION (LARGE MARKET)

- **KUSA, Denver, CO**, a Gannett-owned NBC affiliate, wins for “true commitment to issue-based coverage of politics.” Through debates, “truth tests” and its online voters guide, KUSA made a “concerted effort to educate its viewers about the political process.” Judges singled out KUSA debate moderators Kyle Clark and Brandon Rittiman for “asking pointing questions, scrutinizing the responses and pressing the candidates for actual answers.”
- **KXAN, Austin, TX**, an NBC affiliate owned by Media General, wins for its “crisp and informative” coverage of women’s health and the abortion debate in Texas. The stories were “balanced” and “thought provoking.” Judges praised KXAN for providing a local perspective on a national issue: “This reporting even-handedly lays out the effects this will have on Texas residents, giving anyone who watched it a richer understanding of the issue.”

### LOCAL STATION (SMALL MARKET)

- **WDSU, New Orleans, LA**, a Hearst-owned NBC affiliate, wins for its coverage of corruption in local politics. “It was tenacious investigative journalism that held the candidates accountable,” the jury said. The station’s “genuine shoe-leather reporting” on a race for judge led to a federal investigation.

## **CRONKITE/JACKSON PRIZE FOR FACT CHECKING**

This is the second year that the competition included the Cronkite/Jackson Prize for Fact Checking Political Messages, named for the founding director of FactCheck.org, Brooks Jackson, and selected by a jury convened by the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania, home of FactCheck.org.

- **KUSA, Denver, CO**, winner of this year’s large market award (see above), also wins the Fact Checking award. KUSA won the Cronkite/Jackson Prize in 2013 as well. The jury said KUSA “continues to produce the best fact checking segments on local TV.” They praised the station for scriptwriting, presentation and production techniques, calling them “a model for others.” Political reporter Brandon Rittiman’s presentation is exemplary: “He doesn’t rush through complicated material,” the jury said, “he gives viewers time to absorb the images, the text and his findings.”

Said APPC director and University of Pennsylvania professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “KUSA’s commitment to fact checking is unrivaled. KUSA produced 55 fact-checking segments in 2014, even more than the 44 it produced in 2012.”

## **LOCAL PUBLIC STATION**

- **KPBS, San Diego, CA**, earns its second Cronkite award. Judges were impressed by the station’s breaking the story of the scandal surrounding San Diego Mayor Bob Filner, and then continuing its coverage. “KPBS took control of the story and was the go-to source for reporting on it.... They did a great job of getting access to the key players, utilizing different formats to showcase information and keep audience interest,” the jury said.

## **LOCAL INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT**

- **Mike Lowe, WITI, Milwaukee, WI**, wins at this Fox O&O for his investigation of the role of big money in Wisconsin politics and setting corporate tax rates. Judges praised Lowe for illuminating complicated issues that have a real impact on government and business in Wisconsin. “These reports demonstrate what is so painfully missing from local TV news nowadays: hard-hitting, informative, useful, well-produced and clear-cut journalism.”

## **LOCAL STATION GROUP**

- **Hearst Television** garnered its eighth consecutive Cronkite award for its “impressive, multi-pronged, multi-platform approach” to covering local political issues. Calling their programming a “public service,” the jury praised Hearst for its efforts to push content to its online and mobile applications. The judges were impressed with Hearst’s continued “top-down commitment” to political coverage by all its stations.

## **ACHIEVEMENT IN NATIONAL INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

Designating a special category for two of this year’s entrants, the judges honored investigative reporting by two journalists and their networks.

- **Dina Gusovsky and CNBC.com** were recognized for the “hard-hitting” production *Death & Dishonor: Crisis at the VA*, a documentary that exposed major problems with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system. Gusovsky was praised for “putting the focus on an extraordinarily important national problem that nobody else was looking at,” judges said. “What was most notable were her balanced approach and the absence of hyperbole or drama. Excellent questions, excellent writing.”
- **María Elena Salinas and Univision** were recognized for immigration coverage in *Entre el Abandono y el Rechazo*, which aired on the program *Aquí y Ahora*. Judges praised the “balanced and revealing” reporting from the point of view not of politicians, but of families in their countries of origin, which brought viewers face-to-face with women and children directly affected. “This kind of story is often left out of the immigration debate,” the judges said, noting that both reporter and camera crew put themselves in harm’s way in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala to get the story. Univision won a Cronkite award in the National Network Programming category in 2013.

No awards were given in the categories of Cable Station or National Individual Achievement.

The awards will be presented at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on Friday, May 15. For more information, including the winning entry videos, visit [www.cronkiteaward.org](http://www.cronkiteaward.org).

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