

**Payne Awards for Ethics in Journalism
Conflict of Interest Policy**
—Adopted: March 29, 2004—

The integrity of the Payne Awards for Ethics in Journalism requires that the judges make every effort to avoid conflicts of interest and the perception of conflicts of interest.

Given the judging panel's involvement in journalism, it is unrealistic to expect that any judge will not know some of the nominees or have relationships with some of the nominated organizations. We are confident that all the judges are able to put aside these relationships and make unbiased evaluations based on the merits of each nomination. The goal of this policy is to identify real or perceived conflicts of interests that would make it difficult to reach an unbiased decision or would result in a perception of bias in the judging process.

1 (a). A conflict of interest is any relationship with a nominated organization or individual that would prevent a judge from offering an unbiased evaluation or reaching an unbiased decision on the merits of the nomination; or

(b) A relationship that has a strong likelihood to lead nominees or the public to perceive that a judge has a conflict of interest that would undermine the credibility of the judging process.

For example:

—It would be a conflict of interest for a judge to participate in the discussion of a nomination from an organization that is a current or former employer.

—It would be a conflict of interest for a judge to participate in the discussion of a nomination where a close personal friend or associate is either nominated or has played an important role in the nominated organization's activity related to the nomination.

2. (a) Where a conflict of interest exists, the judge has an obligation to declare the conflict to the judging panel and to withdraw from discussion of the nomination(s) where the conflict exists.

2. (b) Should another judge raise a question or concern regarding another judge's possible conflict of interest, the judge with the possible conflict will withdraw unless the question or concern is resolved to the satisfaction of the judging panel.

3. The recused judge may participate in the discussion of other nominations in the same category so long as the discussion is not focused on the merits of a nomination relative to the nomination where the conflict exists.

4. Should the nomination causing a judge to withdraw from discussion emerge as one of the leading candidates for an award in the category, the recused judge shall not participate in the discussion leading to consensus. Should the nomination not emerge as a finalist, the judge may participate in the discussion.

5. Any member of the judging panel may request a vote of the panel rather than a consensus decision. All ballots in a vote shall be recorded and retained by the judging panel chair. The voting process shall not be public.