



National Federation of Press Women, Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2023

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Texas communicator wins national sweepstakes award

A Texas Senator and communications business owner has won the overall sweepstakes award in the National Federation of Press Women's 2023 Professional Communications Contest.

Judith Zaffirini of Laredo was announced as the top award winner on June 24, 2023, at NFPW awards dinner and ceremony in Cincinnati, Ohio. She won \$250 cash and a plaque for finishing in first place.

She is the first Hispanic woman elected to the Texas Senate, the second highest-ranking senator, and the highest-ranking woman and Hispanic senator. She was re-elected in 2020 in the tenth landslide victory.

She has received more than 1,100 awards and honors for her legislative, public service and professional work, including more than 400 in communication. Zaffirini has 13 years of teaching experience, including at college and university levels.

Press Women of Texas twice selected her as their Communicator of Achievement. She has won many awards from PWT and NFPW for her publications, speeches, and public relations campaigns. Zaffirini also was named the sweepstakes winner in 2021.

Through her business, Zaffirini Communications, she also provides professional communication services, including consulting, workshops and seminars, keynote addresses, and writing.

"Congratulations to Judith on being named the 2023 National Sweepstakes Award winner," NFPW President Karen Rowley said. "Her work represents the high standards NFPW members adhere to, and we're delighted to be able to recognize her accomplishment—especially since this is the second time in three years she has been named the national sweepstakes winner."

Mary Jane Skala of Kearney, Nebraska, a reporter for the *Kearney Hub*, finished in second place in the sweepstakes competition. She writes features and covers health issues for her newspaper. She also writes a weekly column about moving to the sometimes-quirky corn and cattle country after 40 years as a newspaper editor in Cleveland. She was the NFPW sweepstakes winner in 2020 and 1996. Skala is an accomplished writer and consistently finishes in the top three in the national contest. She receives a check for \$100 for finishing in second place.

Tying for third place in the contest were Cris Barrish and Bill Newcott both of Delaware. Barrish a national award-winning investigative reporter, writes and produces news and feature stories and produces videos for WHY?Y, the leading public media organization in the Philadelphia Region, including Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The senior investigative reporter at the Wilmington (Del.) News Journal for many years, Barrish won dozens of national and regional awards for his exposés about corruption, incompetence, and sheer outrageousness in the First State. He won the University of Colorado/Denver Press Club Al Nakkula Award for Police reporting and other honors for his Pulitzer Prize-nominated series of investigative stories on the failed efforts by police, prosecutors, and medical officials to stop a pedophile pediatrician who raped more than 100 young girls he treated.

Newcott has written for many publications, including National Geographic, The Saturday Evening Post, Alaska Beyond, Northwest Travel, and is producing state and national award-winning feature stories and a monthly column, "Treasure Hunting," for Delaware Beach Life. Also, during his wide-ranging career in communications, he has been an award-winning Film Critic, Columnist, TV Host and Creator of AARP's Movies For Grownups (and AARP Travel editor).

For the first time since affiliate sweepstakes awards have been awarded, the Arkansas Press Women affiliate won the sweepstakes award. Sweepstakes winner is determined by the number of entries from the affiliate that place in the national contest.

NFPW is a nationwide organization of women and men pursuing careers across the communications spectrum, including print and electronic journalism, freelancing, new media, books, public relations, marketing, graphic design, photography, advertising, radio, and television.

Recipients from across the country were honored for excellence in communications during an awards ceremony in Cincinnati, Ohio. A distinguished group of professional journalists, communications specialists, and educators judged nearly 2,000 entries in a wide variety of categories. Only first-place winning entries at the state level are eligible to enter the national contest. All entries were published or broadcast between Jan. 1, 2022, and Dec. 31, 2022.