

Minnesota News Council

Promoting Fair, Vigorous and Trusted Journalism



2007-2008 Annual Report

TO OUR FRIENDS, CONTRIBUTORS AND HEARING BOARD MEMBERS:

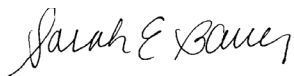
The fiscal year that ended March 31, 2008, was a year of change for the Minnesota News Council. After leading the News Council for 14 years, Gary Gilson retired as executive director and assumed the title of Executive Director Emeritus. During his tenure, Gary played an indispensable role in raising public awareness of the Council and helping it thrive as the nation's oldest — and for a time, only — independent news council. With a grant from the Knight Foundation, in his final full year as executive director, Gary worked in conjunction with the Washington State News Council to spearhead a nationwide competition to create two new news councils elsewhere. Thanks to those efforts and the Knight funding, news councils were founded in Southern California and New England. We wish Gary the very best in his retirement.

Growth and Development in 2008-09

We have ambitious plans for the News Council in fiscal year 2008-2009. One of our highest priorities is expanding our educational programming. This includes a plan to partner with other journalism groups to sponsor forums and events for the public and media professionals and to expand our mock hearing program to classrooms across the state. We also plan to continue our monthly online newsletter, *Newsworthy Online*, and are looking forward to a new season of *Newsworthy TV*. From an operational and organizational standpoint, we will further refine our Web site while adding more diversity to our hearing panel and our board of directors.

In sum, we view the year we have just completed as a new chapter in the News Council's history and development, and a new beginning for an organization that plays a vital role in promoting fair, vigorous and trusted journalism. Please visit our Web site for the most up-to-date information on activities and initiatives. Also consider making a year-end gift to the News Council: we cannot do our work without dedicated supporters like you.

Sincerely Yours,



Sarah E. Bauer
Executive Director



Among our most significant developments:

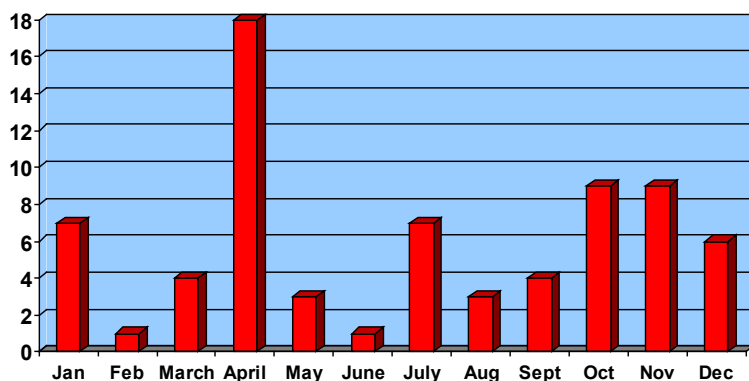
- *We have added new members to our board of directors and our hearing panel;
- *We introduced a new electronic monthly newsletter;
- *We've broken new ground with the first hearing about online-only news content and conducted a hearing via hearing via teleconference to consider a complaints against the *Bemidji Pioneer* and the *Duluth Budgeteer News*;
- *Erika Roland joined our staff as the News Council's first development director;
- *We finished a full review of our finances, significantly cutting costs for payroll, telephone, Internet services and insurance; and
- *We increased our productivity, thanks in part to a more up-to-date Web site that includes an online process for submitting complaints.

2007 Complaint Highlights

With the fiscal constraints at both major Minnesota dailies, the role and mission of the Minnesota News Council is more vital than ever. A summary of complaints follows.

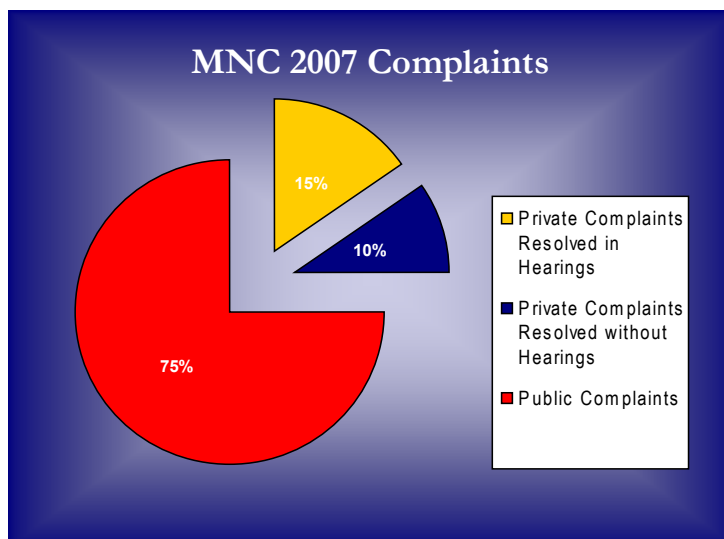
In 2007 the News Council received:
 *72 total complaints;
 *54 public complaints;
 *18 private complaints; and
 *11 of 18 private complaints were resolved in a public hearing.

2007 MNC Complaints Filed by Month



In 2007, the News Council received 72 complaints. This chart shows the breakdown by month.

Three-quarters of the complaints received by the News Council were general or "public" complaints. The News Council considers a complaint public when the complainant is not named or alluded to in the news they complain about; unresolved public complaints are not eligible for a public hearing.



2007 Hearings

Hearing #147: Susan & Tim Hatfield v. Winona Post (02-15-07) - Complaint Upheld

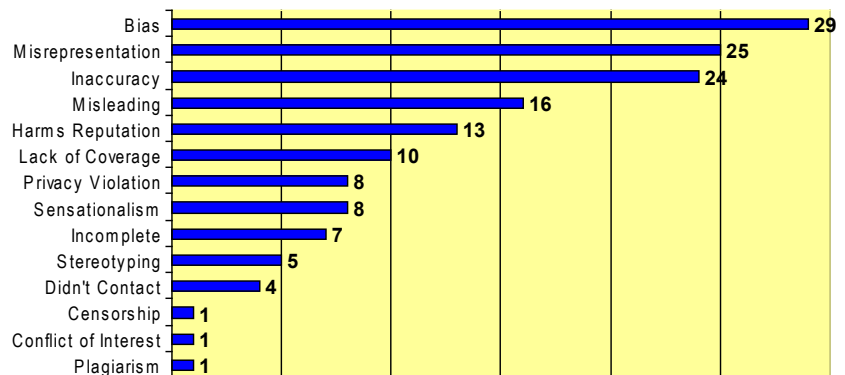
Hearing #148: Joselyn Murphy & Thomas Bruels v. Ely Echo (02-15-07) - Complaint Denied

Hearing #149: Citizens for Truth in Government v. Bemidji Pioneer (04-19-07) - Complaint Upheld in Part, Denied in Part

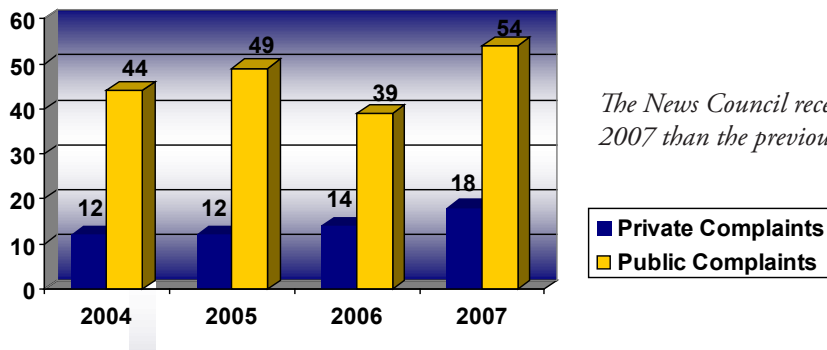
Hearing #150: Tax Cut Rally Attendees v. WCCO-TV (06-21-07) - Complaint Upheld

Hearing #151: Mari Newman v. Minnesota Daily (08-16-07) - Complaint Upheld in Part, Denied in Part

2007 Complaint Allegations



MNC Complaints 2004 - 2007



*The News Council received 25% more complaints in 2007 than the previous year.**

**You can read more about complaints filed with the Minnesota News Council, as well as read all determinations from public hearings since 1970 at our Web site. Go to www.news-council.org. Keyword: "Hearings."*

HEARING BOARD MEMBERS 2007-08

The hearing board meets every other month to consider unresolved complaints about news coverage. Half of its members are former or practicing journalists, half are public members; the hearing board is chaired by a former justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

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Retired Columnist
St. Paul Pioneer Press

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Lakeshore Weekly News

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University of St. Thomas

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***Retired in 2007**

****Retired in 2008**

+Joined in 2007

++Joined in 2008

Remembering Hesham Hussein

Hesham Hussein was president of the Muslim American Society – MN Chapter, founder of two Arab-speaking schools, a teacher, father, imam and a spokesman for the state's Muslim community. He served on the Minnesota News Council from July 2005 until his passing in Jan. 2008. Hussein, 44, died in a tragic car accident on Jan. 26, 2008 while driving from Medina to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Hussein was originally from Cairo, Egypt and is survived by his wife, Abeer, and their five children: Abdullah, Abdul-Rahman, Abdul-Hadi, Hoda and Bushra.



2007-2008 Financials+

April 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008

Total Revenue: \$82,201*

Total Expenses: \$144,240

Net Income: (\$62,039)

Unrestricted donations:

Educational Institutions: 8%

Corporations: 63%

Individual: 20%

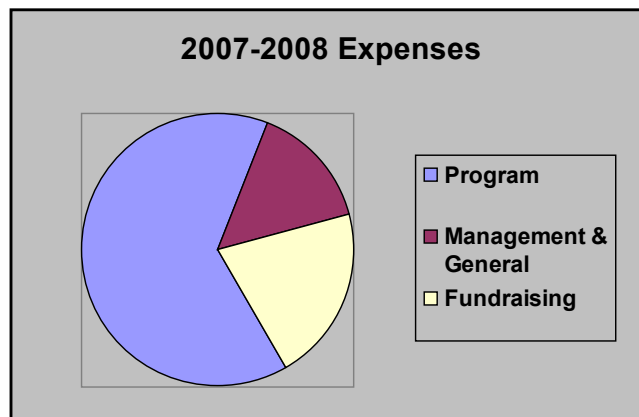
Media: 9%**

Endowment: \$426,992

+Copies of the News Council's 2007-08 independent auditor's report are available upon request.

*In 2008, MNC changed accounting practices to no longer record pledges as income until fulfilled.

** In 2008, MNC no longer received funding from Star Tribune Foundation, its largest single donor.



Program: \$92,891

Management & General: \$21,316

Fundraising: \$30,033

TOTAL: \$144,240

2008 ACCOUNTABILITY AWARD PRESENTED TO MNC CO-FOUNDER BOB SHAW



*Sarah Bauer & Bob Shaw
at the 2008 MNA Convention*

The Minnesota News Council presents its Accountability Award annually to a person or publication that has worked to promote fair and trusted journalism in the state. The News Council presented its 2008 award to Bob Shaw at the MNA Convention Jan. 24, 2008.

In 1970, when he was working as the MNA Manager, Bob played an integral part in founding the News Council. The News Council began as an offshoot of the "Ways and Ethics Committee" of the MNA and eventually became an independent nonprofit, but Bob's dedication to the organization's mission has never ceased. Shaw was a member of the hearing board from 1971-1981, and has served as its "resident historian" by recently recounting the organization's early history to the News Council staff and board of directors.

Accepting the award, Shaw noted, "The News Council is a difficult proposition for newspapers to accept; but the public loves the News Council." He encouraged newspapers throughout Minnesota to continue to participate in the News Council complaint process.

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Promoting fair, vigorous and trusted journalism since 1970.

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