

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **James Heaney Named Winner of the 2019 Nellie Bly Award for Investigative Reporting**

ALBANY, May 6, 2019 – Founding editor and executive director of *Investigative Post*, **James Heaney**, who broke the Buffalo Billion story, has been selected as this year's recipient of the Nellie Bly Award for Investigative Reporting. The Award is given yearly by the Museum of Political Corruption in Albany, New York.

"It's an honor to receive the Nellie Bly Award," Heaney said. "It's a shame, though, that more than a century after Bly's reporting on crooked politics in New York, corruption continues to flourish in state government."

The *Investigative Post* is an online media outlet devoted to investigative reporting. Heaney is an award-winning journalist whose work has focused on political corruption and social issues in New York State.

"Because investigative reporting is an investment in time and money, and may ruffle a few feathers, many news outlets opt not to expend the resources," says Susan Arbetter, host of WCNY's The Capitol Pressroom. "Then there's Jim Heaney, who went out of his way to create a non-profit outlet devoted to the deep, consequential reporting that makes the world a better place. Democracy in New York is healthier thanks to Heaney and his small but fearless band of reporters."

The Buffalo Billion scandal is the pay-to-play contracting deal that eventually reached all the way up to the Governor's Office. Heaney broke the story and pursued it through years of investigative reporting. Preet Bharara followed Heaney's lead in bringing charges and eventually securing convictions in the scandal. Heaney's work illustrates how investigative reporting, at its best, functions as a watchdog working for the public good.

Heaney was an investigative reporter with *The Buffalo News* from 1986 to 2011 and a reporter and editor with *The Orlando Sentinel* from 1980-86. His coverage has focused on economic development, local and state government, politics, education, and housing and transportation. He was an early practitioner of computer-assisted reporting. Heaney has won more than 20 journalism awards and was a finalist for the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

"Nellie" Awards have been won previously by *New York Times* reporter Susanne Craig, for her investigative reporting on Donald Trump's tax returns. Other "Nellies" have been won by *Times* reporters Megan Twohey and Jodie Kantor, for their reporting on Harvey Weinstein and the #MeToo movement.

The Museum of Political Corruption established the Nellie Bly Award for Investigative Reporting in 2017 to recognize the role that investigative reporting plays in rooting out high-level corruption and graft, exposing flaws in social justice, and maintaining an informed electorate. The award is named after late 1800s pioneering investigative reporter Nellie Bly.

Bly is the famous New York *World* journalist who spent 10 days in the women's insane asylum on Blackwell's Island. Her exposé on the institution's cruel conditions led to major reforms. Bly is perhaps best known for her solo trip around the world in 72 days. She performed another major feat of investigative reporting when, in 1888, she took the train to Albany and arranged, through a crooked lobbyist, to buy a vote in the New York State Legislature for \$1,250.

Bly never paid the lobbyist, but the Museum of Political Corruption *will* be paying a \$1,250 cash prize to the recipient of the Nellie Bly Award for Investigative Reporting, know as the "Nellie." The money was raised over the last two months in a Kickstarter campaign launched by University at Albany journalism students.

Judges for the award included Frank Anechiarico, Susan Arbetter, Rosemary Armao, Thomas Bass, Bruce Roter, Meave Tooher, Susan Weber, and Karol Kamin. The judges found much about Heaney's passion for justice and determination to uncover the truth that mimics Bly's celebrated career.

Chartered in 2015 by the New York State Board of Regents, The Museum of Political Corruption is an Albany-based, 501(C)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan institution committed to educating and empowering the public by offering a better understanding of political corruption and encouraging solutions that promote ethics reform and honest governance.

More information about the MPC and its educational and outreach wing, The Center for Ethical Governance, can be found at [www.museumofpoliticalcorruption.org](http://www.museumofpoliticalcorruption.org).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW:**

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