WALTER CRONKITE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TELEVISION POLITICAL JOURNALISM 2013 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

LOS ANGELES, March 6, 2013 – Proving that political coverage can be both informative and compelling, the 2013 winners of the Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Television Political Journalism were announced today by the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. The 2013 Cronkite Awards recognize distinguished work produced during the 2011-2012 election cycle.

CRONKITE/JACKSON PRIZE

This competition introduced a new category: the Cronkite/Jackson Prize for Fact Checking Political Messages, named for the founding director of FactCheck.org, Brooks Jackson, and selected by a special jury convened by the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania, home of FactCheck.org.

- Local station winner: KUSA, Denver, CO, an NBC affiliate owned by the Gannett Company. The jury was impressed by KUSA’s commitment of reportorial talent to its 44 “Truth Tests,” the skill with which it minimized the impact of the visuals in the analyzed ads and the on-air/online synergy created by posting the analyses and supporting articles and sources on 9news.com.

- National winner: CNN. Tom Foreman’s in-depth “Reality Checks” effectively used three-dimensional graphics to clarify the complexity of the underlying issues, set the candidates’ exchanges in historical context and underscore corrections.
Said APPC director and University of Pennsylvania professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “In a competition filled with exemplary work, the graphics innovations of CNN and KUSA, and KUSA’s web outreach stood out.”

LOCAL BROADCAST STATION

• **KARE TV, Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN**, a Gannett-owned NBC affiliate, wins this category. Especially impressive to judges was its coverage of the marriage equality debate in which – through a partnership with Minnesota Public Radio – reporters traveled the state, interviewing citizens with diverse viewpoints and “getting to the core of this issue.” Judges recognized the station’s efforts to find thought-provoking viewpoints that propelled the story and informed the viewer: “KARE’s strength is in its storytelling. Coverage was fair, balanced and deeply personal.”

• **WBNS 10TV, Columbus, OH**, a CBS affiliate owned by the Dispatch Broadcast Group, receives a Special Commendation for Citizen Engagement. Judges were impressed with the station’s online interactive voter guide, created in partnership with the *Columbus Dispatch* and *ThisWeek Community News*, which helped voters learn how the issues affected their lives personally. Judges also applauded WBNS for its “Show You Care & Vote” bus tour, which traveled to college campuses across the state, registering more than 130 people to vote. “It is important for TV stations to be engaged with their citizens. These efforts should be celebrated.”

LOCAL BROADCAST STATION - INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT

• **Marshall Zelinger, KMGH, Denver, CO**, wins this category for his “clarity of presentation” and “modern production techniques” at this E.W. Scripps Company-owned ABC affiliate. His reporting was “thoroughly researched and well presented,” and his “truth tracker” segments included debates and speeches. When his pieces were limited by time, he put extended explanations of issues and links to related information on the KMGH website – providing what judges praised as “an additional depth” to his coverage.

• **Tom McKee, WCPO-TV, Cincinnati, OH**, a Scripps-owned ABC affiliate, receives a Special Commendation for Citizen Engagement. Judges were impressed with his extensive fieldwork, traveling the state to record 135 questions from Ohio citizens that he then presented to candidates to answer in sit-down interviews. “He did something different to bring citizens into the conversation in a very real way.” As a one-man shop, he videotaped the questions, set up the candidate interviews, wrote the scripts and oversaw postproduction. “A lot of work went into this effort, and voters got the maximum benefit from his reporting.”

LOCAL CABLE STATION

• **Northwest Cable News (NWCN), Seattle, WA**, owned by Belo Corp., wins for its “innovative production techniques” and “analysis-heavy coverage… a political junkie’s
"dream." Highlighted was the station’s effort to connect with viewers through Google+, Facebook and Twitter, “exemplifying the power of social media and modern technology to engage viewers in the conversation."

- **NewsChannel8/Politico/WJLA, Arlington, VA**, owned by Allbritton Communications, also wins this category. It was praised for its "in-depth and incisive" reporting, its use of new technology and its commitment to helping viewers understand how their election day choices affect their lives. Judges noted that the cable/publication/broadcast operation – NewsChannel8 is a 24-hour cable news channel that operates as part of WJLA-TV (an ABC affiliate) and partners with Politico – demonstrates what pooled cross-platform resources can do.

**LOCAL PUBLIC STATION**

- **TVW, Olympia, WA.** Washington State Public Affairs Network, a nonprofit funded primarily by the Washington state legislature, is one of the oldest public affairs networks in the country. TVW wins for “compelling, fair and very visual treatment” of issues affecting the state, with judges singling out examinations of coal and marijuana legalization. “Washington voters are lucky to have TVW as a news source to turn to.”

**LOCAL STATION GROUP**

- **Hearst Television** garnered its seventh consecutive award for “comprehensive and extremely well-presented” coverage. Judges admired the station group’s use of the Internet to complement broadcast coverage, including an election app.

- **Belo Corp.** is a first-time winner in this category for its “engaging, clear, balanced and extremely informative” election coverage, using an impressive variety of broadcast and interactive online formats to track races at all levels – local, state, regional and national.

Judges were impressed that both Hearst and Belo made a top-down commitment to getting their stations to air an impressive amount of quality political journalism: “Shining a spotlight on this kind of commitment is a core mission of the Cronkite Award. The leadership of these groups asked their stations to dedicate themselves to this mission, and the stations rose to the challenge.”

**NATIONAL INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT**

- **Jonathan Karl, ABC News**, the winner in this category, was singled out for his “refreshing and original” analysis of complex topics. His probing interviews of presidential primary candidates were singled out as particularly effective, “getting candidates to relax, but never backing away from tough questions. He has a unique style of storytelling. He’s likeable, yet unrelenting in getting the facts.”

- **Martha Raddatz, ABC News**, receives a Special Commendation for Debate Moderation for her work in the vice presidential debate. Judges praised her for being “an active moderator who struck the right balance between facilitating and shaping the debate. She
posed excellent questions, asked for specifics and did her best to keep the candidates on point.”

NATIONAL NETWORK PROGRAMMING

This year, instead of selecting a regularly-scheduled national news program, judges gave the Cronkite Award to the campaign coverage carried across the schedules of two network entrants.

- **BET** not only informed African-Americans about the candidates and issues; jurors noted that BET also issued “a call to action to potential voters.” While stories were substantive and insightful, “a lot of heart and passion went into pieces” as well.

- **Univision** journalists who interviewed the presidential candidates were praised for being “relentless in their approach to getting information.” Though “their questions were agenda-driven for the Latino community, this is precisely what community news requires.”

Judges said that both BET and Univision “served their viewers extremely well,” adding that “all Americans deserve the level of solid coverage that these networks provide their audiences.”

The Walter Cronkite Awards for Excellence in Television Political Journalism are named for distinguished journalist and longtime CBS anchor Walter Cronkite. In addition to the Cronkite/Jackson Prize jury, a panel of nine judges was chaired by Geneva Overholser, director of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism. In 2013, well over 100 entries – a record – were received.

“It was an especially strong field, and judges were encouraged that it was so hard to pick winners,” said USC Annenberg professor Martin Kaplan, director of USC Annenberg’s Norman Lear Center, which has administered the biennial awards since 2000. “The entries demonstrate that against long odds, TV journalists across the country are determined to get it right in a medium that most Americans still turn to in order to learn about their electoral choices.”

The awards will be presented at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., on Friday, April 19. For more information about the awards, visit the website at [www.cronkiteaward.org](http://www.cronkiteaward.org).

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