

PRESS RELEASE

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

ALBANY – 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 Buffalo Billion scandal is the pay-to-play contracting deal that ensnared a handful of contractors and politicians and eventually reached all the way up to the Governor's Office. Heaney—the first journalist to notice something strange in the official documents—pursued the story 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.

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.

The Museum of Political Corruption established the Nellie Bly Award in 2017 to recognize the role 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.

"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."

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."

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.

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.

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.

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