

# GPA 2026 BNC RULES

Contests sponsored by the Georgia Press Association offer recognition in the form of a plaque or certificate for outstanding or meritorious newspaper work, thereby helping to improve our newspapers in Georgia.

**CONTEST DEADLINE: All entries must be submitted online by Friday, Jan. 23, 2026.**

**TO ENTER, LOGIN at [www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia](http://www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia). Your Association code is GAPRESS.**

**Each newspaper may designate ONLY ONE username and password to make entries in editorial contest. Username and password should be different from username and password for Better Newspaper Ad Contest.**

All entries must be submitted online unless otherwise noted in the rules.

For questions please contact **Sean Ireland** at GPA 770-454-6776 or [sireland@gapress.org](mailto:sireland@gapress.org).

Judges are asked to give comments on all winning entries.

1. Online entries must be submitted by **Jan. 23, 2026**. Online entry system is deactivated after the deadline.

2. Contest is open to all active and media associate members of the Georgia Press Association. First eight entries for newspapers paying contest fee with dues are free. After eight entries, cost is \$9 per entry, per category, except for Freedom of Information, General Excellence and Photo of the Year. Online system DOES NOT calculate \$72 discount. All entered newspapers are automatically entered in the General Excellence competition and all first-place photos are entered in the Photo of the Year competition.

3. The contest is for work published from **January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025**.

4. Tri-weeklies, semi-weeklies or twins will be considered weeklies and will submit consecutive issues from one week or consecutive issues from a two-week period. A consecutive issue is defined as the next day of publication for dailies and weeklies or the next day that particular section is published.

5. The circulation figure printed in the **2025** Georgia Press Association membership directory will be the official figure used for determining division placement. For weeklies published more than once per week, division placement will be determined by multiplying the circulation figure by the number of days per week published. A newspaper's number of publication days prior to July 15 will be used to determine the entry division for that newspaper in that contest year.

6. Division classification for entries to be submitted in each category will be as follows:

**Division A will include all daily newspapers;**

**Division B will include all weekly newspapers with circulation of 3,800 to 15,000;**

**Division C will include all weekly newspapers having 2,000 to 3,799 circulation;**

**Division D will include all weekly newspapers having less**

**than 2,000 circulation;**

**Division E will include all Media Associate members.**

7. If less than four entries are made in a category for divisions B through D, the entries will move up to the next division to compete. If less than four entries are made in a category for Division A, the entries will be combined with the entries in that category for Division B for judging. If less than four entries are made in a category for division E, all newspapers with circulation of 15,000 or more must compete in the daily division and all other newspapers compete in the equivalent weekly division. Newspapers may move up in division but cannot move down. All entries must be entered in the same division if a newspaper chooses to move up.

8. In the case of ties for General Excellence, the following formula will be used: Stage 1 - The newspaper with the most first places in the Better Newspaper Contest will win. Stage 2 - If there is still a tie, the newspaper with the most points in the following categories will win: Layout and Design, Editorial Page, Lifestyle Coverage, Sports Section and Local News. This tiebreaker system will be used for first and second place. All third-place ties will be awarded a third-place win.

9. Submit one copy of each exhibit (entry) for each separate category you enter. Publishers entering two or more categories must submit separate entries (exhibits) for each category entered.

10. Each newspaper must enter all categories into the online system under one username and password (different from username and password for Better Newspaper Advertising Contest) and pay with a credit card via telephone or mail a check to GPA to cover all entry fees. Entry fee online does not include discount for first eight entries. Subtract \$72 from online total for payment amount.

11. Judging shall be done by out-of-state judges.

12. Plaques or certificates will be awarded to first-place winners in each classification. Certificates will be presented to second- and third-place winners in each classification. No honorable mentions will be awarded.

13. No entries shall be returned. All entries become the prop-

erty of Georgia Press Association.

14. In categories 11-30 and 32, newspapers may submit entries for more than one individual staffer.

15. The same story or photo may not be submitted in more than one division. If a story or photo was published in multiple newspapers, it may only be submitted in the newspaper with the highest circulation.

16. Member newspapers may enter the individual writings of their news bureaus. Bureau reporters may only participate in categories 11-13 and 21-28. Entries will be in the highest circulation division of the newspapers represented.

17. All digital files must appear in their original form and not be altered after publication.

### GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Classifications: A, B, C, D, E

The top award in the Better Newspaper Contest is based on overall evaluation of the newspaper. All newspapers that enter the contest are automatically entered in the General Excellence competition. There is no entry fee for this category. Points are awarded as follows:

1st place - 6 points, 2nd place - 4 points, 3rd place - 2 points

For the categories: Page One, Layout & Design, Local News Coverage, Lifestyle Coverage, Sports Section or Pages, Editorial Page, Editorial Writing, Headline Writing, Special Sections, Community Service, and Investigative Reporting

1st place - 3 points, 2nd place - 2 points, 3rd place - 1 point

For the categories: Best Photo Gallery on a Newspaper Website, Best Web Photo, Newspaper Website, Multimedia Journalism, Magazine Product, Best Magazine Story - Original Writing, Best Magazine Original Commentary/Opinion Writing, Best Magazine Photography, Best

Magazine Cover Design, Best Magazine Human Interest Feature, Best Magazine Business Feature, Best Magazine Themed Issue, Editorial Cartoonist, Business Writing, Religion Writing, Education Writing, News Photograph, Spot News Photograph, Sports Photograph, Sports Feature Photograph, Feature Photograph, Photo Essay, Best Use of Graphics or Illustration, Serious Column, Humorous Column, Sports Column, Lifestyle Column, Feature Writing, Sports Coverage, Sports Feature, Enterprise Story, Breaking News Writing and Special Sports Section.

Points do not accrue toward General Excellence for Emerging Journalist Award, Freedom of Information Award, Georgia Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Mental Health Reporting Award, and Center for Integrity in News Reporting (CFINR) Award of Excellence - Georgia.

ADVERTISING CONTEST POINTS - A maximum of 18 general excellence points will be awarded to newspapers based on what they win in the 2026 Advertising Contest. One point will be given for the first-place winner in each category of the Advertising Contest. A half-point will be given for the second-place winner in each category of the Advertising Contest.

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## PHOTO OF THE YEAR

(ONLY ONE WINNER)

First-place photography entries from every division, both weeklies and dailies, will be judged together to choose the Photo of the Year. First-place winners are automatically entered in this category. There is no entry fee for this category.

# CATEGORIES

## 1. PAGE ONE (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit as your entry full-page PDFs from two consecutive issues plus one issue from the month of May. Judging will be on the factors of appearance, quality and news worthiness, not on size alone. Factors to be considered include general appearance and reader appeal, including typography, pictures and other illustrations, headlines, use of white space, layout and proofreading. The pages will be judged as a whole; all factors will be considered. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

## 2. LAYOUT AND DESIGN (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

### Hal M. Stanley Trophy

Entries will be judged entirely on design and makeup, choice of typefaces and headline usage. Printing quality should be disregarded. Submit as PDFs any two consecutive issues from the month of October. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

## 3. LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

### W. Trox Bankston Trophy

Judges will consider the variety and balance of news coverage and the excellence of news-writing style, in combination with the quality and use of photography, in news presentation. Submit as PDFs two consecutive issues or sections, plus one issue from the month of March. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

## 4. LIFESTYLE COVERAGE (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

The judges will consider the variety and balance of family news, consumer news, recreation, do-it-yourself projects, social events and social concerns, excellence of writing styles and use of photos. Submit as PDFs two consecutive issues or sections plus one issue from the month of April. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

## 5. SPORTS SECTION OR PAGES (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Judges will consider the variety and balance in sports coverage, excellence of writing styles and use of photos. Submit PDFs of two consecutive issues or sections plus one issue from the month of either October or November. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

## 44. SPECIAL SPORTS SECTION (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Any special edition or issue in which a sizeable part of the newspaper is devoted to the topic of a local sport or sports importance in which the community has a particular interest. Newspapers will submit an entire special issue or special section. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Judge will consider excellence and depth of supporting editorial material and use of pertinent photography and illustrative material. Entries will score extra for skillful handling of tie-in advertising if applicable. If a section is produced by more than one newspaper, the section shall be eligible for entry only by the newspaper with the highest circulation. Newspapers may submit more than one entry.

## 6. EDITORIAL PAGE (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

### J.C. Williams Trophy

Emphasis will be given by the judges to locally generated material, editorials, illustrations, etc., which would be indicated by the entry. Judges will consider overall readability, emphasis on local issues, personal columns, features and cartoons or local photographs. Submit as your entry full-page PDFs of two consecutive pages plus a page from the month of June. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

## 7. EDITORIAL WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

### H.H. Dean Trophy

This award is designed to honor a newspaper in each classification for distinguished editorial writing. Submit full-page PDFs for three editorials.

## 8. HEADLINE WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Recognizes excellence and creativity in writing headlines. Judging will be based on whether the headline fulfills the mission of the story, clarity and creativity. May include news brief and editorial headlines. Submit full-page PDFs of three headlines along with each article to equal one entry. \*ARTICLE MUST ACCOMPANY HEADLINE. Newspapers may submit more than one entry. Only one place will be awarded per newspaper.

9. SPECIAL ISSUES/SPECIAL SECTIONS (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Any industrial, progress, fair, celebration, building, historical, patriotic, anniversary, other special edition, or an issue in which a sizeable part of the newspaper is devoted to a project of particular interest or importance to the community, may be entered. Newspapers will submit an entire special issue or special section as a PDF. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Judge will consider excellence and depth of supporting editorial material and use of pertinent photography and illustrative material. Entries will score extra for skillful handling of tie-in advertising if applicable. If a section is produced by more than one newspaper, the section shall be eligible for entry only by the newspaper with the highest circulation. Newspapers may submit more than one entry.

10. COMMUNITY SERVICE (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

W. G. Sutlive Trophy

This award is to honor newspapers that have performed meritorious service to further the welfare and progress of their communities. Entries must consist of no more than 15 articles — news stories, editorials, columns, photographs and cartoons — that document the newspaper's effort on one specific project. The articles should be above and beyond the routine coverage that the newspaper provides and should contribute substantially to understanding or solution of the problem. A cover letter describing the background or results may accompany the PDF entry. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. The letter should note the size of the community. Newspapers may submit more than one entry.

11. BUSINESS WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Award given in recognition of outstanding reporting on business, industry, or financial activities, issues or events with emphasis on clarity and relevance for the non-business reader. Submit full-page PDFs of three articles, pages or sections. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline.

12. RELIGION WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

Award given in recognition of outstanding reporting on religious issues in the community. This category is for locally generated religious news. Do not enter syndicated or canned articles. Submit full-page PDFs of two consecutive religion sections or pages. If you do not have a section or page, submit three articles showing consistent local coverage of religious issues in your news hole. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline.

13. EDUCATION WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Award given in recognition of outstanding reporting on education issues in the community. This category is for locally generated education news. Do not enter syndicated or canned articles. Submit full-page PDFs of two consecutive education sections or pages. If you do not have a section or page, submit three articles showing consistent local coverage of education issues in your news hole. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline.

14. NEWS PHOTOGRAPH (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit a full-page PDF with a single photo of a planned news event. Name/description of the photo should be entered in the explanation box. Photographer may submit more than one entry.

15. SPOT NEWS PHOTOGRAPH (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit a full-page PDF with one photo of an unexpected news event for which there was no advance assignment and no planning was possible. Name/description of the photo should be entered in the explanation box. Photographer may submit more than one entry.

16. SPORTS PHOTOGRAPH (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit a full-page PDF with a single sports-related photo. Name/description of the photo should be entered in the explanation box. Photographer may submit more than one entry.

17. SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit a full-page PDF with a single sports-related photo that is not game action (reaction, sidelines, coaches, cheerleaders, crowds, etc.) Judging emphasizes originality, reader appeal and technical excellence. Name/description of the photo should be entered in the explanation box. Photographer may submit more than one entry.

18. FEATURE PHOTOGRAPH (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit a full-page PDF with a single feature photo. Name/description of the photo should be entered in the explanation box. Photographer may submit more than one entry.

19. PHOTO ESSAY (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit a full-page PDF with a sequence of photographs. Use of Photoshop or other methods of enhancing the photograph are allowed. Name/description of the photo essay should be entered in the explanation box. Photographer may submit more than one entry.

20. BEST USE OF GRAPHICS OR ILLUSTRATION (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

Albert and Dorothy Jenkins Award

Submit a full-page PDF of a pre-planned photograph or of a combination of graphic-design elements that enhance a story or featured group of stories or the overall appearance of the page. Name of artist/photographer must accompany entry. Artist/photographer may submit more than one entry.

21. SERIOUS COLUMN (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Otis A. Brumby Trophy

Submit full-page PDFs only for three different representative columns. The column must appear regularly in the newspaper and be written by a local individual. Judges will consider style, subject matter and effectiveness. This is an individual award. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. Columnist may submit more than one entry.

22. HUMOROUS COLUMN (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Joe Parham Trophy

Submit full-page PDFs only for three different representative columns. The column must appear regularly in the newspaper and be written by a local individual. Judges will consider style, subject matter, and effectiveness. This is an individual award. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. Columnist may submit more than one entry.

23. SPORTS COLUMN (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

Submit full-page PDFs only for three different representative columns. The column must appear regularly in the newspaper and be written by a local individual. Judges will consider style, subject matter, and effectiveness. This is an individual award. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. Columnist may submit more than one entry.

24. LIFESTYLE/FEATURE COLUMN (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit full-page PDFs only for three different representative columns, such as movie reviews, how-to columns and other lifestyle-related pieces published in the newspaper. The column must appear regularly in the newspaper and be written by a local individual. Judges will consider style, subject matter and effectiveness. This is an individual award. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. Columnist may submit more than one entry.

25. FEATURE WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

An award to encourage the local preparation and use of feature material in Georgia newspapers. Judges may consider subject matter, style, necessary research, and ability to entertain or hold the reader's interest. Submit full-page PDFs only for three different articles. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline. Newspaper or individual may submit more than one entry.

26. ENTERPRISE STORY (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit full-page PDFs (beginning and any jumps) for three stories, written under deadline or without deadline pressure, that take a comprehensive look at a topic of high reader interest. The enterprise pieces explore issues more fully by including information from additional sources, more research and contrasting points of view. Enterprise stories are generally long-form, well illustrated and often accompanied by sidebars and/or graphics. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline. Newspaper or individual may submit more than one entry.

27. BREAKING NEWS WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)

Submit full-page PDFs (beginning and any jumps) for three stories written under deadline pressure. Judges may consider subject matter, content, style, completeness and clarity. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline. Newspaper or individual may submit more than one entry.

28. INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

Submit full-page PDFs for articles that demonstrate a reporter's initiative and thoroughness in research and investigation and the ability to convey the results to the reader. A cover letter explaining the circumstances is strongly suggested. Use the explanation box online to enter

a cover letter. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit articles with that individual's byline. Newspaper or individual may submit more than one entry.

**29. SPORTS COVERAGE (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)**

Submit full-page PDFs only for three different stories, written under deadline pressure. Game stories are acceptable. Judges may consider subject matter, content, style, completeness and clarity. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline. Newspaper or individual may submit more than entry.

**30. SPORTS FEATURE STORY (CLASSIFICATIONS: A, B, C, D, E, F)**

An award to encourage the local preparation and use of sports-related feature material in Georgia newspapers. Judges may consider subject matter, style, necessary research and ability to entertain and or hold the reader's interest. Submit full-page PDFs only for three different stories. No supporting data other than cover letter will be accepted. Use the explanation box online to enter a cover letter. This is an individual or staff award. To have an individual's name on the award, submit three articles with that individual's byline. Newspaper or individual may submit more than entry.

**31. BEST PHOTO GALLERY ON A NEWSPAPER WEBSITE (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

Criteria should include organization, quality of photos and storytelling. Submit the URL if the site remains live. If not, submit JPEGs or PDFs. Photos must have been taken by full-time staff or a correspondent.

**32. BEST WEB PHOTO (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

Submit the URL if the site remains live. If not, submit a JPEG or PDF. Photo must have been taken by a full-time staff or a correspondent.

**33. NEWSPAPER WEBSITE (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

Submit the URL and a statement that should include a description of the website, its attributes and why it should win best newspaper website. Use the explanation box online to enter your statement and username and password if necessary. Websites will be judged for news content and coverage, visual appeal, navigation (ease of finding material on the site), organization, integration of advertising, timeliness and updates to the site. Judges also will look at innovative ways newspapers use websites to complement coverage in the newspapers.

**34. MAGAZINE PRODUCT (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

This category recognizes non-traditional special sections produced by the newspaper in magazine format. Frequency of publication can be one time or recurring. Magazine is not required to be a part of the newspaper's traditional circulation; products distributed independently of the newspaper's circulation will be considered. Criteria for judging will include advertising content, design and effectiveness of theme and purpose. Limit of four entries/titles per newspaper. NOTE: A recurring publication (periodical) issued monthly or more frequently may only submit ONE ENTRY in this category. Submit a PDF of the magazine or a link to where it may be viewed online.

**35. BEST MAGAZINE STORY - ORIGINAL WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

This category recognizes a story appearing in a magazine produced by a newspaper. The story must be produced by a newspaper or magazine staff writer or freelance writer hired specifically for the magazine. Syndicated or canned copy is not eligible. Submit as a PDF.

**36. BEST MAGAZINE COMMENTARY/OPINION WRITING (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

This category recognizes a story appearing in a magazine produced by a newspaper. The story must be produced by a newspaper or magazine staff writer or freelance writer hired specifically for the magazine. Syndicated or canned copy is not eligible. Submit as a PDF.

**37. BEST MAGAZINE COVER DESIGN (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

This category recognizes the best design of a cover of a magazine produced by a newspaper. The cover must be designed by a member of the newspaper or magazine staff or a freelancer hired specifically for the magazine. Submit as a PDF.

**38. BEST MAGAZINE PHOTOGRAPHY (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

The category recognizes overall quality of photography in a magazine produced by a newspaper. The images must be taken by a staff member of the newspaper or magazine or a freelancer hired specifically for the magazine. Submit as a PDF.

**39. BEST MAGAZINE HUMAN INTEREST FEATURE (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)**

This category recognizes a story appearing in a magazine produced by a newspaper. The story must be based on interview subject, style, research and overall interview and story telling.

#### 40. BEST MAGAZINE BUSINESS FEATURE (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

This category recognizes a story appearing in a magazine produced by a newspaper. Judging must be based on a single story or column in a magazine on a local business, financial institution, real estate company or any other related local; economy stimulating company.

#### 41. BEST MAGAZINE THEMED ISSUE: (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

A themed issue is a single issue or special supplement in magazine format produced by a newspaper devoted to a dominant theme, identified on the front cover and throughout the contents. Judging will be based on originality of the issue, creativity, ability to grab readers attention, and overall strategy as it relates to the issue.

#### 42. MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM (CLASSIFICATIONS: DAILY AND WEEKLY)

This award recognizes innovative uses of media and media platforms to reach a targeted audience. Submissions may include social media broadcasts, pages and posts through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other platforms; video shot and edited for the web; podcasts or other nontraditional newspaper formats (not including magazines).

#### 43. EDITORIAL CARTOONIST (CLASSIFICATION: DAILY AND WEEKLY, ALL ENTRIES JUDGED TOGETHER)

Submit full-page PDFs of three examples of the individual artist's work. Three cartoons equal one entry. PDFs must include artist's name, date of publication and newspaper name. Local-issue cartoons should be accompanied by a letter of explanation. Use the explanation box online to enter letter. Artist must be a staff employee of the newspaper. Artist may submit more than one entry.

## 45. Center for Integrity in News Reporting (CFINR) Award of Excellence - Georgia

The Center for Integrity in News Reporting will provide \$5,000 to a reporter/reporters in Georgia for the best example of impartial, objective and fair reporting in newspapers. Newspapers will enter work for this award through their state newspaper contest. One overall winner will be chosen for Georgia. Enter in your newspaper's assigned division. First-place winners will be chosen for each division, and one overall winner out of the first-place winners will receive the \$5,000 prize.

Entries should consist of at least one reported news story, not a column or editorial. If part of a series, the full series by the same reporter or reporting team may be submitted as one entry.

Judges will use the following rubric, which focuses on verifiable facts, balanced perspectives, neutral tone/language, transparency and thoroughness of source, while excluding opinion and emotional appeals:

##### Accuracy and Fact-Checking

- All factual claims should be supported by evidence.
- Information has been verified through multiple independent and reliable sources.

##### Balance and Multiple Perspectives

- On controversial or complex issues, the report should present multiple viewpoints without favoring one over the other.
- The amount of attention given to different sides should be proportional to the weight of the issue.

##### Neutral Language and Tone

- The language used should be objective and informative, not sensationalized, or emotionally charged.
- The amount of attention given to different sides should be proportional to the weight of the issue.

##### Sourcing and Transparency

• Reporters should clearly identify their sources, ideally with verifiable details (e.g., name, position, institution) rather than vague references like "leading doctors say."

##### Separation of News and Opinion

- The entry must be a straight news report and not an editorial, opinion piece, or column

##### Completeness and Context

• The entry should provide enough context and background information for the audience to understand the broader implications of the story.

- It should cover "the whole story," not just the parts of a story that support a particular narrative.

## 46. Georgia Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Mental Health Reporting Award

In collaboration with the Georgia Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, this award honors exceptional work by a GPA member during 2025 to promote mental health awareness and support, particularly promoting the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This award will be judged by representatives of GBHDD. All entries will be judged together for one overall winner. Enter as daily or weekly.

Criteria:

- Demonstrated commitment to mental health awareness and advocacy.
- Evidence of impactful initiatives or programs implemented in 2025.
- Collaboration with mental health organizations or community groups.
- Measurable outcomes and positive impact on mental health awareness.

## 47. Freedom of Information Award

The Georgia Press Association Freedom of Information Award may be given both to a daily newspaper and to a non-daily newspaper that did the most during the previous year to uphold the principles of the First Amendment and to protect the public's right to know. Judging will be provided by the University of Georgia Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Nominations may be made by the newspaper itself, by another newspaper or by the GPA Awards Committee. The nominations should consist of a written description of actions taken and results accomplished, with documentation as appropriate. This prestigious award will be presented during the annual Better Newspaper Contest Awards Banquet.

No entry fee.

## 48. Emerging Journalist Award

Winners of this award will have demonstrated excellence in the field of journalism and maintained high standards of quality and ethics. The award aims to reinforce the importance of a journalist's role by recognizing and nurturing talent to promote quality journalism. A daily winner and weekly winner will be awarded. Nominees must be an employee or regular contributor to a GPA-member newspaper. This award is open to nominees younger than 30 with less than five years of experience writing professionally for a newspaper.

Entry may include as many as six samples of the nominee's work from the previous calendar year and must be accompanied by a letter of nomination from the editor or publisher noting the contributions and achievements of the nominee as well as a statement to the length of the nominee's professional career.

Entries will be judged on the quality and variety of work samples and the impact of the nominee's work in the community.

Winners will receive a plaque or certificate at the GPA Annual Convention.

**Deadline for nominations is January 23, 2025.** Winners are not eligible to win the award in subsequent years. Nominations for persons not selected for the award in any given year may be reconsidered in subsequent years provided the person still meets the award criteria.

Entry fee: \$9

**BNC contact information:**  
**Georgia Press Association**  
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770-454-6776

P.O. Box 4003  
Marietta, GA 30061



**Submitting online entries: Each newspaper may designate ONLY ONE username and password to make entries in editorial contest. Username and password should be different from username and password for Better Newspaper Advertising Contest. All PDFs must be full pages and include the banner or flag of the newspaper. Please remember to include jump pages for all articles and name both pages similarly so that judges can easily relate them. Use only letters and numbers when naming files. Do not use symbols or spaces, which may cause errors. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary.**

**EDITORIAL CONTEST  
BASIC ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS  
[www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia](http://www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia)**

BNC Entries must be SUBMITTED ONLINE by **Friday, Jan. 23, 2026**.

The electronic entry system will be online and open for entries **on Dec. 8, 2025**.

Step 1 — Register at [www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia](http://www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia). Your association code is GAPRESS. Use one email address and password for all editorial entries. Use a different email address and password for making all entries to the GPA Advertising Contest. You will receive a confirmation email, which you will need to complete registration. Remember your password.

Step 2 — Login to <http://www.newspapercontest.com/Georgia>. You will see a page that is mostly blank. This is where you will start each time you log in. As you submit entries, this page will display a list of those entries. A complete set of rules is available on the contest home page. Some browsers, such as Safari, will open the rules in a new window; others will require you to download the PDF file to your computer.

Step 3 — Click on the “Add New Entry” link.

Step 4 — On this page, select your newspaper name. Information will auto fill on this page. If that information is incorrect, please call GPA at 770-454-6776. **Your division will be selected for you based on your circulation from Line 16B (average) on your 2024 Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation.** Fill in the preparer’s name.

Step 5 — Select “Editorial” from the contest type drop-down menu when entering Divisions A-F or “Daily Division Editorial” or “Weekly Division Editorial” when entering the Daily only and Weekly only and Editorial Cartoonist categories.

Step 6 — Select the contest category. This is a drop-down menu for your convenience. This field will clear each time you save an entry, so you must select a category for each new entry. When you select the category, special instructions will appear below it. A newspaper may submit multiple entries for a single category unless otherwise noted.

Step 7 — Below the rules is an explanation/cutline box. Some contest categories require an explanation. If an explanation is required, it will be specified within the special instructions. The explanation/cutline box is limited to 3,000 characters. It’s a good idea to write your explanation in another program, such as Word, and copy/paste into the explanation box. If a URL is required, fill in the URL box; there is no need to type <http://>. Some categories, such as Best Website, require a URL.

Step 8 — Include the name of the entry. It will be helpful if the entry name matches the headlines on the pages so the judge can find it easily. Photos should have a brief description. You may also want to name your files in the same manner. If a judge cannot tell what is to be judged, the entry could be discarded without a refund.

Step 9 — Include the name of the person or people who should be credited for any award. This is generally the writer, reporter, photographer, graphic artist, cartoonist, etc.

Step 10 — Add your file or files. You can drag and drop files or use the “Add files” button to navigate your files. Upload as many files as are necessary to complete your entry. Compress PDFs using Adobe Acrobat if necessary and combine PDFs when possible. When dragging and dropping files, you may select multiple files and drop them all at once. **Use only letters and numbers when naming files. Do not use spaces or symbols.**

Step 11 — Click the “Save” button when you have completed your submission. If you click the “Back to list” button, you will lose the entry you just completed. After clicking “Save,” you will be directed back to the list of your entries.

Step 12 — To submit another entry, click “Add new entry.” As long as you have not logged out of the system, your newspaper name will still be in place and you can simply start at Step 5 again. You may log out and log back in later to continue adding entries. You will need to select your newspaper name each time you log in.

Step 13 — Once you are finished submitting all entries, review the list. You may not change an entry, but you may delete it and resubmit it. Click on the magnifying glass to the left of the entry in the list of entries to see the full entry, including a thumbnail of any files that you uploaded. Clicking on the image will open a pop-up window showing the image larger.

Step 14 — Once all entries are submitted and finalized, click the “Billing” button on the list page. This will take you to a page where the entry fee is automatically generated. Your newspaper’s eight free entries are not calculated here. Subtract \$72 from this total to calculate the final amount due. You may pay by phoning in a credit card or mailing payment. Please do not email your credit card information. The submission deadline for entering is Friday, Jan. 23, 2026

Once payment is made, your access to the page will be disabled. If you find out later that you need access, you will need to call the GPA office at 770-454-6776 to have the account enabled.