Winnebago Media Group, Inc. Policies

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Editorial Independence Policy

Winnebago Media Group (WMG) is committed to providing independent, accurate, fair and trustworthy journalism that serves the communities in which our publications operate.

As a nonprofit organization supported by readers, donors, businesses, foundations and community partners, we recognize that public trust depends on our ability to make editorial decisions free from outside influence.

Editorial Decisions Belong to the Newsroom

WMG retains full editorial authority over all content published in our newspapers, websites and other media platforms.

Decisions about what we cover, who we interview, how stories are reported, headlines, photographs, placement and publication timing are made by newsroom leadership and editorial staff.

Our Board of Directors provides organizational and financial oversight but does not direct individual stories or routine newsroom decisions.

No donor, advertiser, sponsor, foundation or outside organization may dictate, suppress, alter or influence our coverage.

Financial Support Does Not Buy Influence

We welcome financial support from individuals, businesses, foundations and community members who believe in the importance of local journalism.

However, accepting a contribution does not constitute an endorsement of the donor, their business, products, services or opinions.

No financial supporter, regardless of the amount contributed, receives:

- Authority over editorial decisions.
- The ability to determine who or what we cover.
- Advance access to unpublished stories or confidential reporting.
- The ability to review, edit or approve stories before publication.
- Protection from unfavorable or critical coverage.

Grants and designated contributions may support particular reporting areas or projects, but the newsroom always retains complete editorial control.

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Advertising and Sponsorship Are Separate

Advertising purchases, sponsorships and other commercial relationships do not influence our journalism.

Advertisers and sponsors are not guaranteed favorable coverage, preferential treatment or protection from critical reporting.

Paid advertising, sponsored content and promotional material will be clearly distinguished from independent journalism.

Conflicts of Interest

Board members, employees, contractors and volunteers are expected to disclose personal, financial, political or professional relationships that could affect their responsibilities or create the appearance of a conflict.

Journalists must maintain professional independence and ensure that personal interests and relationships do not compromise their reporting.

When a material financial or personal relationship could reasonably affect public perception of a story, WMG will provide appropriate disclosure.

Our Commitment to the Community

WMG will not avoid reporting on an individual, business, organization or institution simply because they financially support our work.

Likewise, financial contributions will never guarantee favorable coverage or prevent critical or investigative reporting.

Our responsibility is to provide independent journalism that informs our communities, holds institutions accountable and gives residents a voice.

Our journalism is supported by the community, but our editorial decisions are never for sale.
This policy is reviewed periodically by the WMG Board of Directors and is made publicly available to our readers, donors and community partners.

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Donor & Financial Transparency

Winnebago Media Group (WMG) is an independent, community-focused nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization committed to providing local journalism that serves the public interest.

We believe our communities deserve to know how their local news is funded and how we protect the independence of our journalism. We are committed to transparency, responsible financial stewardship and maintaining the trust of the communities we serve.

Our Commitment to Transparency

WMG publicly discloses significant financial support to help our readers understand who supports our journalism.

- We disclose the names of individuals, businesses, foundations and organizations contributing $5,000 or more annually.
- Contributions from the same donor are combined when determining the disclosure threshold.
- We provide general information about our revenue sources and make applicable annual IRS Form 990 filings available to the public.
- We generally update donor disclosures annually.

Community Memberships & Supporting Donors

Community support is essential to sustaining independent local journalism.

Through initiatives such as our **Founding 5000 campaign**, we welcome contributions of all sizes from readers, businesses and community members.

Individual supporting memberships below the $5,000 annual disclosure threshold are not routinely identified publicly. We may recognize members who give permission for public acknowledgment.

Supporting memberships and donations do not provide editorial privileges, special access to unpublished reporting or influence over newsroom decisions.

Donor Privacy

We respect the privacy of our donors and supporting members.

WMG does not sell or exchange donor contact information. Personal information is protected and used only for legitimate organizational, financial, fundraising and communication purposes.

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We may share necessary information with authorized employees and service providers to administer contributions and meet legal obligations.

Editorial Independence Comes First

Financial support does not buy influence over our journalism.

No donor, business, foundation, sponsor or other financial supporter may dictate coverage, review or approve stories before publication, prevent unfavorable reporting or receive preferential editorial treatment.

WMG retains complete editorial authority over its publications and reporting, regardless of the source of financial support.

Advertising purchases and financial contributions are treated as separate relationships. Accepting a donation does not constitute an endorsement of a donor, their business, products, services or opinions.

Responsible Financial Stewardship

The WMG Board of Directors provides oversight of the organization's finances and funding relationships.

We maintain financial records, document restricted contributions and grants, and provide regular financial reporting to the board. Contributions are evaluated to ensure they support our mission and do not compromise our independence or organizational integrity.

WMG reserves the right to decline or return contributions that create conflicts of interest, compromise editorial independence or present unacceptable legal, financial or reputational risks.

Our Promise to the Community

Our responsibility is to the communities we serve.

Whether support comes from an individual reader, a local business, a foundation or a community organization, our commitment remains the same: to provide independent, relevant local journalism that informs and connects our communities.

We are grateful to everyone who believes local news matters and helps make it possible.

This public summary reflects Winnebago Media Group's Donor and Financial Transparency Policy. The complete policy is available upon request.

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Board of Directors Conflict of Interest Policy

Winnebago Media Group (WMG) is committed to operating with integrity, transparency and accountability while protecting its mission of providing independent, community-focused journalism.

WMG recognizes that its directors, officers, employees and other representatives may have professional, business, financial, civic or personal relationships within the communities we serve. These relationships do not automatically create a conflict of interest, but they must never compromise WMG's charitable mission, organizational decisions or editorial independence.

Disclosure and Accountability

WMG requires members of its Board of Directors to disclose actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest upon joining the Board, annually thereafter, and whenever circumstances change.

Conflicts may involve, but are not limited to:

- Business ownership, employment or financial interests.
- Relationships with WMG advertisers, vendors, donors or grantmakers.
- Elected or appointed public office or other civic affiliations.
- Financial arrangements or transactions involving WMG.
- Personal or business relationships with individuals or organizations covered by WMG journalism.

Independent Decision-Making

Directors with a conflict of interest must disclose the relationship and refrain from participating in related discussions or decisions, including voting, when required.

The Board's disinterested members are responsible for evaluating conflicts and determining appropriate safeguards. Transactions involving directors or related parties must be independently reviewed and determined to be fair, reasonable and in WMG's best interests.

WMG maintains records of disclosures, board determinations and actions taken to address conflicts.

Protecting Editorial Independence

WMG's journalism is independent of its business, fundraising and governance relationships.

Donors, advertisers, grantmakers, public officials and business partners do not receive influence over editorial decisions in exchange for financial or other support.

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When a relevant personal or business relationship could affect public confidence in a story, WMG will provide appropriate disclosure to readers.

Gifts and Benefits

WMG directors and representatives may not accept gifts, favors, travel or other benefits that could improperly influence, or appear to influence, their decisions or professional responsibilities. Cash gifts and benefits intended to influence organizational or editorial decisions are prohibited.

Commitment to Transparency

WMG reviews its conflict-of-interest practices periodically and expects directors, employees, contractors and newsroom personnel to disclose relationships that could compromise, or appear to compromise, the organization's independence.

Our commitment is straightforward: **the interests of WMG's communities and its mission must always come before the personal interests of those serving the organization.**

This policy is supported by separate internal procedures governing disclosure, review, documentation and enforcement.

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