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New Nonprofit Website Will Provide News and Analysis on State Government with \$600,000 in Funding

The Connecticut News Project, a new nonprofit organization, will provide online news, information, analysis and discussion about Connecticut state government and public policy, with \$600,000 in funding announced today.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is providing \$300,000 through its Knight Community Information Challenge, a \$24 million initiative to help community and place-based foundations find creative ways to use new media and technology to keep residents informed and engaged. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven are providing matching funds.

The Web site, www.ctmirror.org, which is due to start publishing the week of Jan. 25, will provide professional reporting on Connecticut's legislature, executive branch and courts, as well as insight and analysis, disclosing the whys and consequences of public policy decisions.

“Information is as important to a thriving democracy as clean air, jobs and schools. As leaders, local foundations are taking the initiative to meet those information needs,” said Traban Shorters, Knight Foundation's vice president for communities, who leads the challenge. “This project and others like it help ensure that everyone has the information necessary to make decisions about their governments and their lives.”

“Connecticut residents increasingly find themselves in an informational void on matters as personal as planning their children's educations and as global as choosing leaders who will sustain the state's quality of life,” said Linda J. Kelly, president, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. “The goal of this project is to assure that state residents are better informed about their government so they can be more fully engaged in holding state policymakers accountable for addressing the state's needs.”

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The site will also provide access to public, but not easily accessible, state government documents from voting records to school test scores, and serve as a portal to information available elsewhere online. Through a feature called CT Commons, citizens will have opportunities to discuss and express opinions about legislative and government issues, through reader feedback, online public hearings with policymakers, issues forums and conversations.

“We believe strongly that civic life at the community level requires high-quality accessible community information; ctmirror.org will play a vital role enabling Connecticut citizens to use new media to engage in our civic life,” said William W. Ginsberg, president and CEO of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. Support for the project is being provided through one of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven’s anonymous donor advised funds.

In addition, the Connecticut News Project will offer increased opportunities for aspiring journalists to receive training and mentoring on informing the public using these new media tools.

“We are delighted by the generous support of these three foundations. Their funding supports and validates our goal which is to reach the three and a half million Connecticut residents who live in the urban, suburban and rural communities across the state. We can’t do this by ourselves. We’ll seek the help of distribution partners, other media, community groups, foundations, businesses, cultural organizations and individuals,” said James A. Cutie, chief operating officer, Connecticut News Project.

Michael Regan will serve as editor for the Connecticut News Project. He is a former editor for *The Hartford Courant*, supervising coverage of topics including politics, education, health care, the courts and the City of Hartford for more than 20 years. James A. Cutie is the chief operating officer, with primary responsibility for assuring the long-term sustainability of the project. Jim has 35 years of management, marketing, communications and fundraising experience in traditional and online media, founding the original new media division of *The New York Times*. Mark Pazniokas will serve as Capitol bureau chief. Mark is the former state politics writer for *The Hartford Courant* and a former contributing writer for *The New York Times*. Robert Frahm, who covered education for newspapers in Wisconsin and Connecticut for 36 years before retiring from *The Hartford Courant* as its chief education writer, will be the project’s education reporter. Jacqueline Rabe, who has been a reporter, online editor and web site developer for the Washington Post Co’s Southern Maryland Newspaper chain, is the Capitol reporter.

The Knight Foundation grant for the Connecticut News Project is one of 24 other grants announced today for a wide variety of news and information projects across the country.

About the Connecticut News Project

The Connecticut News Project, Inc. is an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit news organization created to reinvigorate coverage of Connecticut’s state government, public policy and politics. Its primary goal is to ensure that the people of the state are better informed about their government, so they can more effectively participate in the development of public policy and hold officials accountable for understanding and addressing the state’s needs. The Connecticut News Project will achieve this goal through original and reliable reporting presented on its website, www.ctmirror.org, and distributed through various other platforms and technologies.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation advances journalism in the digital age and invests in the vitality of communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects that promote community engagement and lead to transformational change. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.

About Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region, dedicated to improving the quality of life for area residents for the past 85 years. The Foundation receives gifts from thousands of generous individuals and families, and last year, awarded grants of nearly \$26 million to a broad range of area nonprofit organizations. For more information about the Hartford Foundation, visit www.hfpg.org or call 860-548-1888.

About The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

Since 1928, donors to The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven have built the community's endowment consisting of over 700 funds and distributing approximately \$14 million in grants annually. The Foundation has been helping donors achieve their charitable goals and improving the quality of life for Greater New Haven residents for more than 80 years. For more information about The Community Foundation visit www.cfgnh.org.

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