



# Gala Night

WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 29, 2025  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The  
Media  
Institute



# Gala Night

WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 29, 2025  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The  
Media  
Institute



# Verizon is proud to support The Media Institute.

**Congratulations and thank you to  
the 2025 Free Speech America Gala  
featured speaker and honorees.**

**Olivia Trusty**  
FCC Commissioner  
Featured Speaker

**Gary Shapiro**  
CTA CEO and Vice Chair  
Freedom of Speech Award

**Hans Vestberg**  
Former Verizon Chairman and CEO  
American Horizon Award

**verizon**



# PROGRAM

2025

## WELCOMING REMARKS

**Richard T. Kaplar**

President  
The Media Institute

**Richard E. Wiley**

Chairman of the Board  
The Media Institute

## KEYNOTE REMARKS

**Featured Speaker**

**Commissioner Olivia Trusty**

Federal Communications Commission

## AMERICAN HORIZON AWARD

**Presenter**

**Thaddeus “Tad” Brown**

Chief Executive Officer  
Harris Blitzer Sports &  
Entertainment

**Honoree**

**Hans Vestberg**

Former Chairman and CEO  
Verizon

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH AWARD

**Presenter**

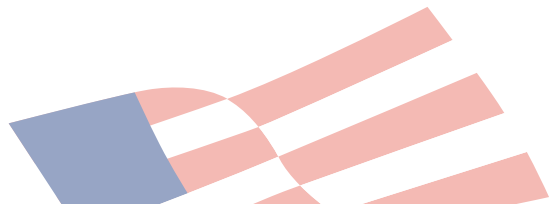
**Sam Feist**

Chief Executive Officer  
C-SPAN

**Honoree**

**Gary Shapiro**

CEO and Vice Chair  
Consumer Technology Association





Proudly congratulates  
**The Media Institute** & salutes  
the honorees of the 2025  
**Free Speech America Gala**



# MASTER OF CEREMONIES



## RICHARD E. WILEY

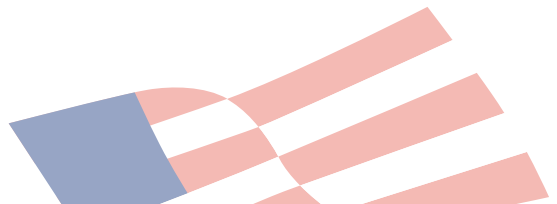
Richard E. Wiley is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Media Institute. He also chairs the Board's Executive Committee.

Mr. Wiley co-founded Wiley Rein LLP, a Washington, D.C., law firm with one of the nation's largest communications practices, in 1983. Mr. Wiley served as a Chairman, Commissioner, and General Counsel of the Federal Communications Commission from 1970 to 1977, and was recognized as a leading force in the agency's initial efforts to foster greater competition and less regulation in the media industry.

Since 1985, Mr. Wiley has been regularly recognized as one of the nation's "100 Most Influential" lawyers by *The National Law Journal*. He also has been profiled in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Globe and Mail*, and *American Lawyer*.

Mr. Wiley was awarded an Emmy by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for leading the development of the nation's digital television transmission standard. He has also received awards from numerous industry-related groups including the National Association of Broadcasters, North American Broadcasters Association, Library of American Broadcasting, Broadcasters Foundation of America, Consumer Technology Association, and *Broadcasting & Cable* magazine.

Mr. Wiley graduated with distinction from Northwestern University (B.S. and J.D.) and holds a Master's degree in Law (LL.M.) from Georgetown University. He also holds Honorary Doctor of Law degrees from Catholic and John Marshall law schools.





# Free Speech Fuels Innovation

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA)<sup>®</sup> congratulates CTA CEO and Vice Chair **Gary Shapiro** (*Freedom of Speech Award*) and former Verizon Chairman and CEO and CES keynote speaker **Hans Vestberg** (*American Horizon Award*) on their recognition as champions of free speech.

Their unwavering commitment to innovation, free markets, and the First Amendment embodies the best of American enterprise and civic engagement.

**CTA**<sup>™</sup> Consumer Technology Association  
Producer of CES<sup>®</sup>

CES<sup>®</sup> 2026 | JAN. 6-9 | LAS VEGAS, NV | [CES.TECH](https://ces.tech)



# KEYNOTE REMARKS

## Featured Speaker



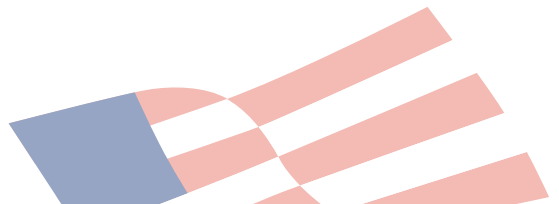
### COMMISSIONER OLIVIA TRUSTY

The Honorable Olivia Trusty was nominated to serve as a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission by President Donald J. Trump. She was confirmed by the United States Senate in June 2025.

Prior to joining the FCC, Commissioner Trusty served as a professional staff member on the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services under the leadership of U.S. Senator Roger F. Wicker. She previously served as a Policy Director on the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and a legislative assistant in the Office of U.S. Senator Roger F. Wicker.

Before her tenure as a Senate aide, Commissioner Trusty served as a professional staff member on the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce and a legislative assistant to U.S. Congressman Bob Latta. Commissioner Trusty began her career in the private sector.

Commissioner Trusty received her B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her M.A. from Georgetown University.



**Kudos to Verizon's  
Hans Vestberg**  
for being a leader  
in connectivity  
and a pioneer in  
innovation.

---

**YOUR FRIENDS AT  
USTELECOM —  
THE BROADBAND  
ASSOCIATION**

**USTELECOM**  
THE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION





# AMERICAN HORIZON AWARD

## Presenter



### THADDEUS "TAD" BROWN

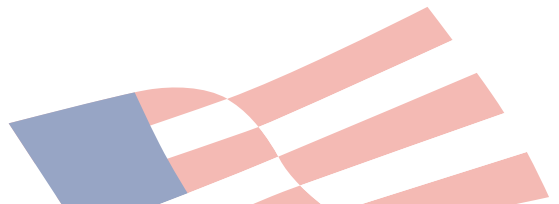
As CEO of Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment (HBSE), Tad Brown oversees one of the largest and most impactful sports and entertainment portfolios in the world. The portfolio spans the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers, the NHL's New Jersey Devils, Prudential Center, as well as other notable investments including Joe Gibbs Racing of NASCAR and Crystal Palace F.C. of the Premier League.

In 2025, under Mr. Brown's leadership, HBSE partnered with Comcast to announce plans for a new state-of-the-art venue in South Philadelphia that will house the Philadelphia 76ers and Philadelphia Flyers. HBSE will bring women's professional basketball to Philadelphia in 2030.

Beyond the ice, turf, and court, Mr. Brown has championed HBSE's role as a force for good. Under his leadership, the organization's community foundations have raised millions to support youth in Philadelphia and Newark, with Mr. Brown serving actively on both boards.

Prior to joining HBSE, Mr. Brown spent nearly two decades with the Houston Rockets, Toyota Center, and Clutch City Sports and Entertainment — including 15 years as CEO. In Houston, he was a member of the NBA's Board of Governors.

Mr. Brown is a graduate of Colgate University, where he was a four-year starter and three-year captain of the varsity basketball team.





FGS proudly congratulates  
The Media Institute and  
the distinguished honorees  
of the 2025 Free Speech  
America Gala, Hans Vestberg  
and Gary Shapiro.

Lead. Influence. Win.

In this ever-changing market environment, FGS Global helps you optimize your valuation and amplify your impact.



# AMERICAN HORIZON AWARD

## Honoree



### HANS VESTBERG

Hans Vestberg became CEO of Verizon in 2018 and Chairman in 2019. He is the architect of Verizon's 5G network strategy, which powers and empowers how Verizon customers live, work, and play. Under Mr. Vestberg's leadership, Verizon was first in the world to offer 5G and 5G Mobile Edge Compute.

Mr. Vestberg's strategic vision has been to create the connections that matter most to Verizon customers, from mobility and cloud services to the latest artificial intelligence applications. He executed transformational investments that have set Verizon up for generational success, including the \$53-billion purchase of C-Band spectrum, the largest such purchase in history.

Prior to joining Verizon, Mr. Vestberg led the successful transformation of Ericsson from a hardware-focused manufacturer to a software and services company.

Mr. Vestberg is a board member of BlackRock and Co-Chair of the New Jersey CEO Council. He is co-founder of the World Economic Forum's EDISON Alliance for digital inclusion and a member of the ITU/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development.

A former athlete and semi-professional Team Handball player in Sweden, Mr. Vestberg is founder of the Jan Vestberg Handball Academy, named after his father, who was his handball coach for most of his sports career. Mr. Vestberg also is past chairman of the Swedish Olympic Committee.

Born in Hudiksvall, Sweden, Mr. Vestberg earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He is married with two children and is fluent in Swedish, English, Spanish, and Portuguese.





# Charter is Proud to Support The Media Institute.

Congratulations to Tonight's Honorees:

- Freedom of Speech Award Recipient Gary Shapiro
- American Horizon Award Recipient Hans Vestberg
- Featured Speaker FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty
- Master of Ceremonies Media Institute Board Chairman and Former FCC Chairman Richard E. Wiley



# FREEDOM OF SPEECH AWARD

## Presenter



### **SAM FEIST**

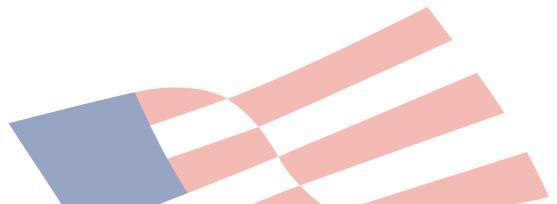
Sam Feist is Chief Executive Officer of C-SPAN, the third CEO in the network's 46-year history. Since fall 2024, he has been responsible for day-to-day operations and long-term strategy.

Mr. Feist's first programming initiative for C-SPAN is "CeaseFire," a new weekly television program launching in fall 2025. "CeaseFire" will bring Democrats and Republicans together to seek common ground and compromise as they discuss the great challenges facing our nation.

Prior to joining C-SPAN, Mr. Feist served as CNN's Washington bureau chief and senior vice president. He oversaw CNN's internal fact-checking team and Special Events unit, and was the executive in charge of CNN en Español. On Election Night, Mr. Feist was responsible for projecting the winners. He is the recipient of five Emmy Awards.

Mr. Feist received his B.A. degree in political science from Vanderbilt University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa. He received his law degree with honors from Georgetown University. Mr. Feist is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, The Economic Club of Washington, D.C., and the D.C. Bar.

He serves on the boards of the National Press Club Journalism Institute, the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs, and the Georgetown University Institute of Politics & Public Service.



# Life's Good.



## HERE'S TO TONIGHT'S HONOREES

We proudly salute Gary Shapiro and Hans Vestberg, and we applaud The Media Institute for promoting free speech, a competitive media environment and excellence in journalism.

### **LG Electronics USA**

Long-time supporter of The Media Institute



# FREEDOM OF SPEECH AWARD

## Honoree



### GARY SHAPIRO

Gary Shapiro is an acclaimed author, speaker, and CEO & Vice Chair of the Consumer Technology Association (CTA)<sup>®</sup>, which represents more than 1,200 consumer technology companies and owns and produces CES<sup>®</sup> – The Global Stage for Innovation.

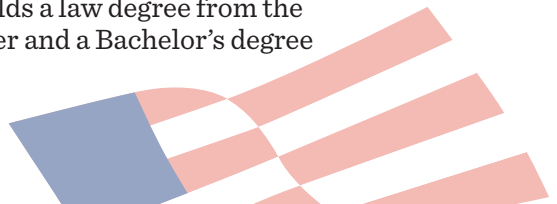
In his more than 30 years as head of CTA, Mr. Shapiro expanded the association's influence and impact as the technology industry grew. He has also transformed CES, expanding its reach globally to attract exhibitors from more than 50 countries, regions, and territories and attendees from some 150.

Mr. Shapiro has earned annual recognition as one of *The Hill's* top lobbyists; *Washingtonian's* Tech Titans; and *Washington Life* magazine's most influential people in Washington. In 2021, he was recognized with the prestigious Legion of Honor Award, conferred by French President Emmanuel Macron.

A *New York Times* bestselling author, Mr. Shapiro has written four books on innovation and change including his latest, *Pivot or Die: How Leaders Thrive When Everything Changes* (HarperCollins, 2024). He has written more than 1,200 opinion pieces for publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post*. He has also testified before Congress more than 20 times.

Mr. Shapiro sits on numerous boards and advisory councils including the Northern Virginia Technology Council, CEO Update Roundtable, Council of Manufacturing Associations board, and Focused Ultrasound Foundation board.

Mr. Shapiro worked on Capitol Hill and served as a law firm associate before joining CTA in 1982. He holds a law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center and a Bachelor's degree from Binghamton University.





# Get in on the *conversation.*

T-Mobile is proud to support The Media Institute's 2025 Free Speech America Gala. Because when voices are free, communities are stronger together.



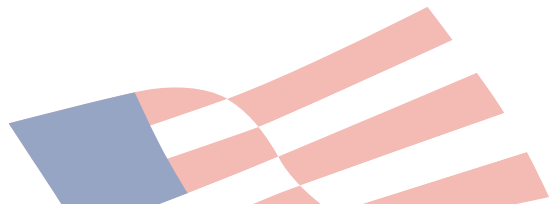
## PLATINUM SPONSORS



## GOLD SPONSORS

NCTA – The Internet & Television Association

Wiley Rein LLP





## **Congratulations to the Free Speech America Gala Honorees**

As the most trusted source of news, broadcasters are committed to reporting the facts, providing lifesaving information and serving their communities.

NAB applauds The Media Institute's mission to protect free speech and its support of broadcasters who are dedicated to keeping their viewers and listeners informed and safe.





## **SILVER SPONSORS**

Charter Communications

CTIA

FGS Global

National Association of Broadcasters

News/Media Alliance

Paramount

T-Mobile

TEGNA

USTelecom | The Broadband Association

The Walt Disney Company

Wilkinson Barker Knauer, LLP

Wireless Infrastructure Association

## **FRIENDS OF THE INSTITUTE**

Paul A. Cicelski

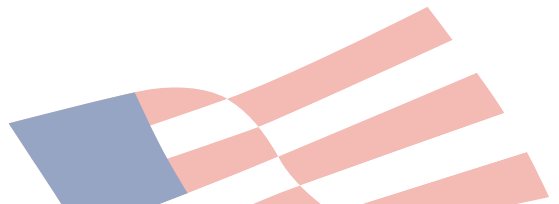
Robert Corn-Revere

Peter Karanjia

Robert M. McDowell

Madeleine Noland

Tyler Tone



*Proudly Supports*

# THE MEDIA INSTITUTE

---

Congratulations to the  
**2025 Free Speech America Honorees**

---

Freedom of Speech Award Recipient

**Gary Shapiro**

CEO & Vice Chair of the Consumer Technology Association

American Horizon Award Recipient

**Hans Vestberg**

Former Chairman & CEO of Verizon

Featured Speaker

**Olivia Trusty**

FCC Commissioner



# WITHOUT FREE SPEECH, WE HAVE NO VOICE

Paramount proudly supports  
The Media Institute and their steadfast  
defense of the First Amendment.  
Congratulations to tonight's  
award winners.

*Paramount*  
A SKYDANCE CORPORATION

# wiley



**We salute The Media Institute for its  
dedication to excellence in journalism.**

**We applaud:**

**Gary Shapiro, Freedom of Speech Award Recipient  
Hans Vestberg, American Horizon Award Recipient  
FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty, Featured Speaker**

**And our own,**

**Richard E. Wiley, Master of Ceremonies**





# WELCOME FROM THE MEDIA INSTITUTE

Welcome to our “Free Speech America” Gala! We invite you to take a break from your daily routine, enjoy the company of friends, and reflect on the foundational freedoms of speech and press at the heart of our democracy. And we ask you to join us in recognizing leaders who have helped foster the robust communications industry and spirit of free expression that define our nation.

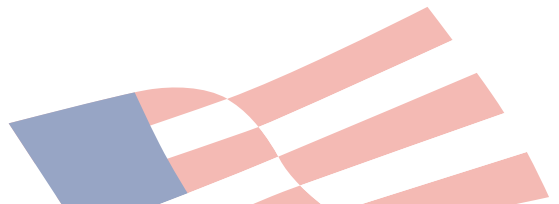
These have been challenging times for the First Amendment. Regrettably, we’ve learned that this cherished constitutional guarantee of free speech and press is far more fragile than we might’ve hoped. We are reminded anew of our duty to help ensure that these freedoms endure.

On this special evening, we’re proud to honor two impressive individuals: Hans Vestberg, whose visionary industry leadership is reflected in our American Horizon Award; and Gary Shapiro, whose unyielding support of the First Amendment exemplifies the spirit of our Freedom of Speech Award.

We are likewise privileged to welcome FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty as our Featured Speaker, Tad Brown and Sam Feist as our award presenters, and our own Dick Wiley as master of ceremonies. And we salute you, our financial supporters, for believing in our work and making it possible.

**Richard T. Kaplar**  
*President*

**Susanna Coto**  
*Director of Public Events*



TEGNA Proudly Celebrates

# The Media Institute

for Its Efforts to Protect  
First Amendment Freedoms



CONGRATULATIONS

*Free Speech  
America*

2025 AWARD HONOREES



Thank you for your commitment to  
safeguarding our nation's free press

**TEGNA**

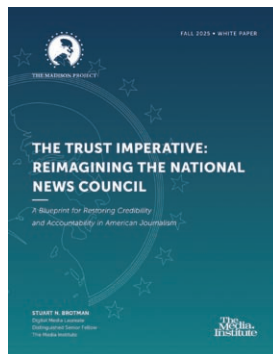


# THE MADISON PROJECT

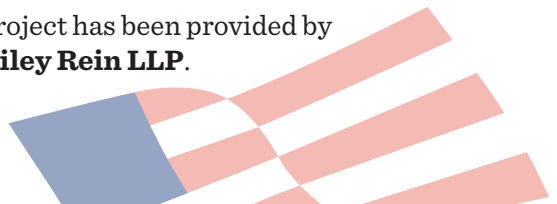
**The Madison Project: Free Speech and Press in American Democracy** is a major initiative of The Media Institute that assesses the impact of free speech and press on the future of democracy.

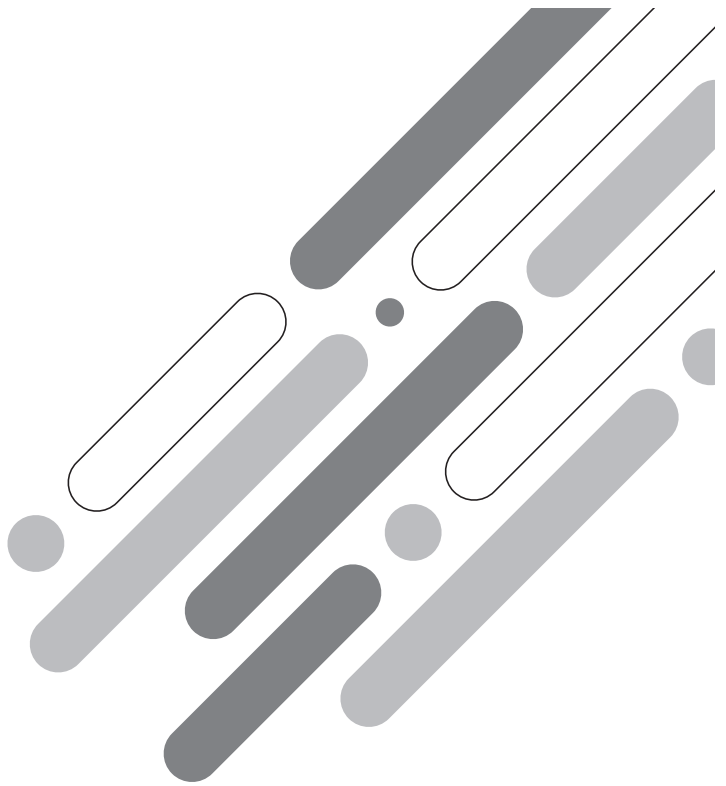
In early September, the Institute announced the appointment of former APTS president **Patrick Butler** as our inaugural **James Madison Fellow**. In this role, Pat will undertake a new effort called “**The First Amendment in the 21st Century**” for The Madison Project. He will examine issues of media credibility and authenticity in the age of AI, how media of all kinds influence public perceptions and opinions, what the public values in a free press, and related topics.

In mid-October, The Madison Project released a White Paper by the Institute’s Digital Media Laureate and Distinguished Senior Fellow, Stuart N. Brotman. Titled ***The Trust Imperative: Reimagining the National News Council***, this White Paper draws on the instructive history of the original National News Council (1973–1984) and imagines what a new iteration — a “National News Council 2.0” — might look like today. ***The Trust Imperative*** may be viewed by scanning the QR code below.



Initial support for The Madison Project has been provided by **Verizon, LG Electronics, and Wiley Rein LLP.**





Congratulations to  
**Hans Vestberg**  
American Horizon Award Recipient

CTIA is proud to sponsor  
The Media Institute's 2025 Free Speech America Gala.

[www.CTIA.org](http://www.CTIA.org)



# FREE SPEECH WEEK

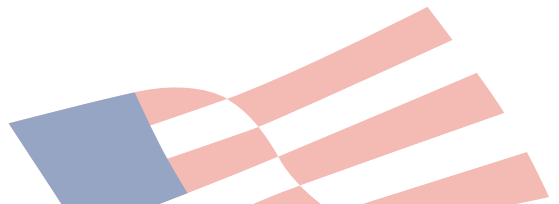
**October 20 – 26, 2025**

Free Speech Week is the only nationwide annual event dedicated to America’s constitutional rights of free speech and a free press. The event has always been a pure celebration of these precious freedoms with no political, partisan, or ideological agenda.

Free Speech Week takes place every year during the third week of October. During the past week, media organizations, schools and universities, civic groups, and other organizations around the country focused on free speech and press issues in a variety of ways. Social media platforms gave all Americans who care about free speech an opportunity to speak out about this freedom.

We continue to salute freedom of speech and freedom of the press tonight with our “Free Speech America” Gala.

The Media Institute created Free Speech Week in 2005 and continues to maintain the FSW website, [freespeechweek.org](http://freespeechweek.org), which features free speech themes, resources, and activities. Next year’s Free Speech Week will take place Oct. 19 – 25, 2026.





The *WALT DISNEY* Company

IS PROUD TO SUPPORT

**THE MEDIA INSTITUTE**

©DISNEY



# DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER

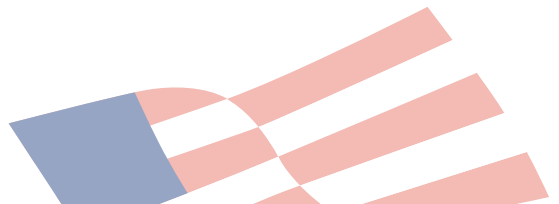
The Digital Media Center (DMC) is a program of The Media Institute that brings clarity to key issues at the heart of today's digital revolution.

Coordinating the DMC's program activities is Media Institute Digital Media Laureate and Distinguished Senior Fellow Stuart N. Brotman. He is the author of *Privacy's Perfect Storm: Digital Policy for Post-Pandemic Times*. His forthcoming book is *Free Expression Under Fire* (Skyhorse Publishing).

Since the Digital Media Center was created in 2020, it has released cutting-edge publications focusing on the digital issues of the day. Examples include:

- **“Net Vitality 3.0: Identifying the Top-Tier Global Broadband Internet Ecosystem Leaders,”** by Stuart N. Brotman.
- **“Executive Brief: Streaming Video Services: Beyond the Tipping Point,”** by Stuart N. Brotman.
- **“Special Report: The New Rules of Media Measurement,”** by Adonis Hoffman.
- **“Primer: Digital Media Trends To Follow in 2022,”** by Stuart N. Brotman.
- **“White Paper: Calibrating Digital Media Trends for the Post-Pandemic ‘New Normal,’”** by Stuart N. Brotman.
- **“Issue Brief: The Role of Targeted Advertising in Supporting First Amendment Principles,”** by Richard T. Kaplar.

The Digital Media Center will continue to shine a light on issues facing digital media and the wider digital world.



The News/Media Alliance  
proudly supports The  
Media Institute

# Free Speech America Gala 2025

and celebrates tonight's honorees:

**Gary Shapiro**

recipient of the Institute's  
Freedom of Speech Award

**Hans Vestberg**

recipient of the American  
Horizon Award



The Alliance thanks you for your dedication to  
free speech and excellence in journalism!



# COMMUNICATIONS FORUM LUNCHEON SERIES

The Communications Forum Luncheon Series, a Washington institution since 1981, is one of The Media Institute's most popular programs. Communications Forum speakers include government officials, industry executives, and prominent analysts. Luncheons take place eight times per year in downtown Washington.

With two dozen corporate and organizational sponsors, the luncheons offer Washington media and telecom policy elites a collegial atmosphere and a wide range of speaker viewpoints to spark lively discussion. Speakers in 2025 have included:

**Curtis LeGeyt**

National Association of Broadcasters

**Commissioner Nathan Simington**

Federal Communications Commission

**Craig Moffett**

MoffettNathanson Research

**Commissioner Anna Gomez**

Federal Communications Commission

**Congressman Brett Guthrie**

U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee

**Danielle Coffey**

News/Media Alliance

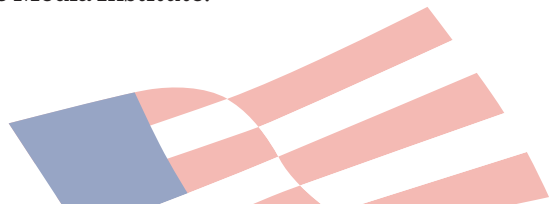
**Scott Delacourt**

Federal Communications Commission

**Jonathan Spalter** (November)

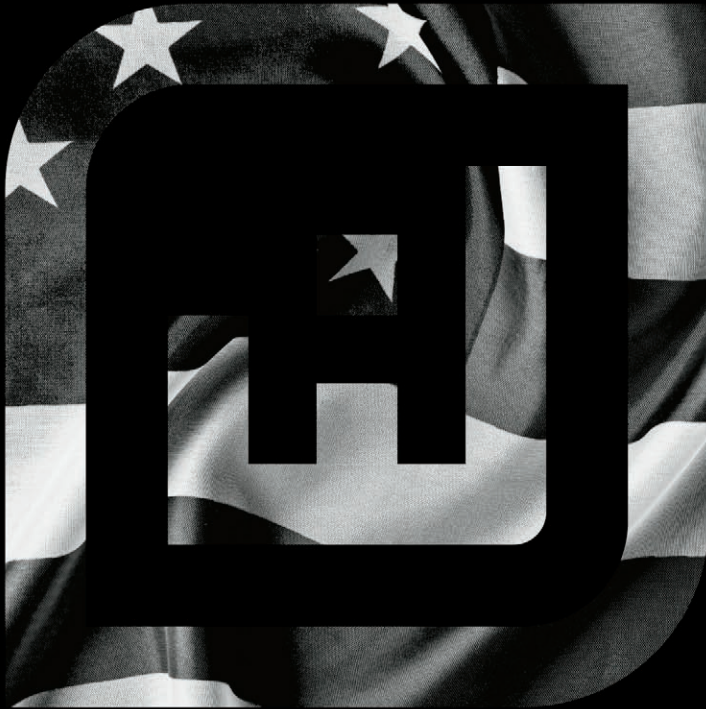
USTelecom | The Broadband Association

We thank our Communications Forum sponsors for their support. For information about becoming a 2026 luncheon series sponsor, please contact Susanna Coto at The Media Institute.





**PROUDLY SUPPORTS THE MEDIA INSTITUTE'S  
2025 FREE SPEECH AMERICA GALA**



*Congratulations*

**TO THE AWARD HONOREES**



# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**David Grimaldi**

Direct Selling Association

**Ashley Messenger**

NPR

**Adonis Hoffman**

The Advisory Counsel LLC

**Chris Moeser**

TEGNA Inc.

**Will Johnson**

Verizon

**Keith R. Murphy**

Paramount

**Richard T. Kaplar**

The Media Institute

**John I. Taylor**

LG Electronics USA

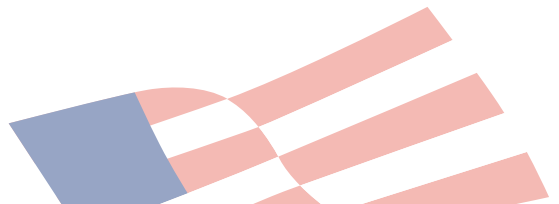
**Jessica A. Marventano**

iHeart Media, Inc.

**Richard E. Wiley\***

Wiley Rein LLP

*\*Chairman*





## ATSC is proud to support The Media Institute's Free Speech America Gala

Together, we celebrate a future built on **free speech**,  
**open dialogue**, and **technological progress**.

### **Congratulations to Gary Shapiro**

of the Consumer Technology Association

Recipient of The Media Institute's 2025 Freedom of Speech Award

As one of ATSC's five founding members, CTA has long championed innovation and technological advancement.



[www.atsc.org](http://www.atsc.org)

**Congratulations to The Media Institute  
for another year of vital support of the First Amendment**

**AWARN**  
**Advanced Warning and Response Network**

**Leveraging advanced emergency alerting, news, and information  
powered by the ATSC 3.0 broadcast standard**



# FIRST AMENDMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Floyd Abrams**

Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP

**Tony Mauro**

American Lawyer Media

**Stuart N. Brotman**

The Media Institute

**Ashley Messenger\***

NPR

**Bruce D. Brown**

Reporters Committee  
for Freedom of the Press

**Michael O’Rielly**

The Media Institute

**Robert Corn-Revere**

Foundation for Individual  
Rights and Expression (FIRE)

**Rodney A. Smolla**

Vermont Law and  
Graduate School

**Adonis Hoffman**

The Advisory Counsel LLC

**J. Joshua Wheeler**

Antonin Scalia Law School  
George Mason University

**Kathleen A. Kirby**

Wiley Rein LLP

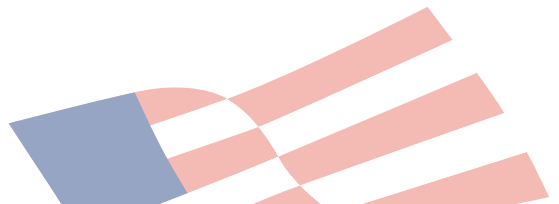
**Laurence H. Winer**

Sandra Day O’Connor  
College of Law  
Arizona State University

**Greg Lukianoff**

Foundation for Individual  
Rights and Expression (FIRE)

*\*Chairman*



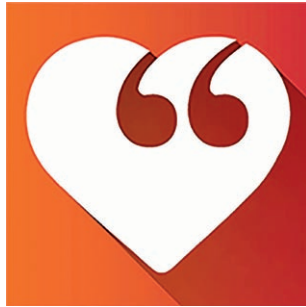


# FREE SPEECH WEEK

**Free Speech: The Language of America®**

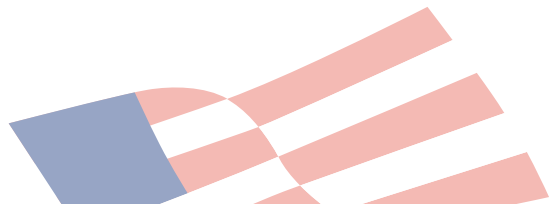


**October 19 – 25, 2026**



**Free Speech Week Social Media Badge**

**[freespeechweek.org](https://freespeechweek.org)**



# The Media.<sup>®</sup> Institute

1950 Old Gallows Rd., Suite 790  
Vienna, VA 22182  
703-506-8030

E-mail: [info@mediainstitute.org](mailto:info@mediainstitute.org)

Visit The Media Institute online at  
[mediainstitute.org](http://mediainstitute.org)

Read blog opinion and commentary at  
[mediacompolicy.org](http://mediacompolicy.org)

Celebrate free speech at  
[freespeechweek.org](http://freespeechweek.org)



The  
Media<sup>®</sup>  
Institute

---

[mediainstitute.org](http://mediainstitute.org)