



# THE RIDENHOUR PRIZES

*Fostering the spirit of courage and truth*

October 18, 2019

To Members of the United States Congress:

As Ridenhour Prize winners and those engaged in the selection and honoring of these winners, we are writing to express support for the intelligence community whistleblower who presented information about President Trump's apparent effort to solicit foreign interference in the 2020 presidential election. We urge you to listen to this and any other future whistleblowers with respect, honor their desire to remain confidential, and ensure that they will be protected against job retaliation as well as physical harm. We also ask that you take appropriate action to address their credible concerns.

Whistleblowing gets investigations started, not finished. Ron Ridenhour, for whom our truth-telling Prizes were named, was the My Lai whistleblower whose letter to Congress and the Pentagon prevented the cover-up of the massacre of 504 Vietnamese civilians on March 16, 1968. Like the anonymous intelligence official who filed a whistleblower complaint alleging that President Trump pressured Volodymyr Zelensky, the leader of Ukraine, to investigate one of his political rivals, former Vice President Joe Biden, Ridenhour was not an eyewitness to the events described in his letter. He relied on information supplied to him by eyewitnesses to the My Lai massacre. Nevertheless, his whistleblowing contained compelling details that helped expose what happened in the village of My Lai in March 1968.

We are deeply disturbed by President Trump's unsubstantiated charge that the whistleblower who filed the complaint about his phone call with President Zelensky is partisan, as well as by his likening of the whistleblower's sources to "spies." We believe it is dangerous for President Trump to insist that the whistleblower be publicly identified. In addition, we believe it is deeply harmful to the rule of law, transparency, government accountability, and civil society to assert that those who seek to listen to whistleblowers and respond to their concerns are engaged in treason.

We also believe it is wrong for elected or appointed officials to engage in discourse that unfairly characterizes the evidence that whistleblowers are presenting. Complaints that whistleblowers share with law enforcement and government investigators inevitably contain both direct and indirect information. Inspectors General throughout the government expect and encourage complainants to bring forward evidence of wrongdoing, not just direct observations. To suggest otherwise, in an attempt to undermine their credibility, will deter individuals within government from reporting abuses of authority and violations of law.

This effort is particularly inappropriate in light of the fact that many of the details contained in the initial complaint filed about President Trump’s phone call with President Zelensky have been confirmed in an official memorandum that was released by the White House.

This nation is facing a constitutional crisis as the President asserts unconstitutional authority to withhold information from the Congress. We hope and trust that you will honor your oath to uphold the Constitution, listen to these whistleblowers with an open heart and mind, and take action to appropriately address any wrongdoing you are able to substantiate.

Signed,

*Ridenhour Prize Former Winners*

- Dr. Scott A. Allen, MD, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2019)
- Alexandria Bombach, Documentary Film Prize winner (2019)
- Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2018)
- Kirby Dick, Documentary Film Prize winner (2013)
- Thomas Drake, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2011)
- Aicha Elbasri, Prize for Truth-Telling (2015)
- Daniel Ellsberg, Courage Prize winner (2003)
- Senator Russ Feingold, Courage Prize winner (2011)
- Anand Gopal, Book Prize winner (2015)
- Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2016)
- Bob Herbert, Courage Prize winner (2008)
- Matthew P. Hoh, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2010)
- Jamie Kalven, Courage Prize winner (2016)
- Sonia Kennebeck, Documentary Film Prize winner (2017)
- Adrian LeBlanc, Book Prize winner (2005)
- Dr. Pamela McPherson MD, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2019)
- Karen Metchis, on behalf of Rick Piltz, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2006)
- Bill Moyers, Courage Prize winner (2008)
- Joshua Oppenheimer, Documentary Film Prize winner (2016)
- Valerie Plame, on behalf of Ambassador Joe Wilson, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2004)
- Dawn Porter, Documentary Film Prize winner (2014)
- James Risen, Courage Prize winner (2015)
- Deborah Scroggins, Book Prize winner (2004)
- Scott Shuchart, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2019)
- Thomas M. Tamm, Prize for Truth-Telling winner (2009)
- Heather Ann Thompson, Book Prize Winner (2017)
- Nick Turse, Prize for Reportorial Distinction winner (2009)
- Amy Ziering, Documentary Film Prize winner (2013)



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### *Ridenhour Prize Partners*

- Danielle Brian, on behalf of the Project On Government Oversight
- Louis Clark, on behalf of the Government Accountability Project
- Randy Fertel, Co-Founder of The Ridenhour Prizes
- Ken Grossinger, Consulting Partner
- Taya Kitman, on behalf of Type Media Center
- Conrad Martin, on behalf of the Stewart R. Mott Foundation & Fund for Constitutional Government

### *Ridenhour Prize Community*

- Carl LeVan, Attendee
- Andrew Kreig, Supporter and Attendee
- Anonymous, Supporter
- Barbara Koepfel, Attendee
- Bruce A. Mason Jr., Supporter and Attendee
- Burton Taylor, Supporter and Attendee
- Colin Campbell, Supporter
- Dan E. Moldea, Supporter
- Dan Morgan, Supporter
- David Burnham, Attendee
- David H Marlin, Supporter
- David Patterson, Attendee
- Deborah Menkart, Attendee
- Debra S. Katz, Supporter
- Don Allen, Attendee
- Edith Goldenhar, Attendee
- Elaine Mittleman, Supporter
- Elias Savada, Attendee
- Eugenia Schenecker, Attendee
- Gar Alperovitz, Attendee
- Getulio P. Carvalho, Ph.D., Supporter
- helen whitney, Supporter
- Henry Hettger, Attendee
- Jane Winfrey, Supporter
- Jeff Sharlet, Supporter
- Jeffrey Kusama-Hinte, Supporter
- Jenefer Ellingston, Attendee
- Jerome M. Ensminger, Whistleblower featured in *Semper Fi: Always Faithful*, 2012 Documentary Film Prize winner
- John Prados, Supporter
- Jon McBride, Attendee
- Jonathan Fox, Attendee
- Julie Burton, Supporter
- Karen Kimball, Supporter



- Kathryn Cook-Deegan, Supporter and Attendee
- Kimberly A. McDowell, Attendee
- Kristin Cabral, Supporter
- Lee Miller
- Linda Millis, Attendee
- Lynne Bernabei, Supporter
- M Aronson, Supporter and Attendee
- Marc Leepson, Attendee
- Mark Hanna, Whistleblower Attorney and Supporter
- Mary Inman, Whistleblower Attorney and Supporter
- Medea Benjamin, Attendee
- Michael Fine MD, Attendee
- Nan Aron, on behalf of Alliance for Justice, Supporter
- Peter Davis, Supporter
- Peter Kuznick, Attendee
- Rien Fertel, Supporter
- Robert L Borosage, Supporter and Attendee
- Robert Shetterly
- Robert Young, Attendee
- Roberta Brandes Gratz, Supporter
- Roger D Hickey, Attendee
- S. Prescott Landau, Supporter
- Salih Booker, Attendee
- Shea Brown, Attendee
- Sharon Gaskill
- Sue Udry, on behalf of Defending Rights & Dissent, Supporter
- Tara McPherson, Supporter
- Timothy Whitehouse, on behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Supporter
- Victor S. Navasky
- Willow Higgins

*Names as of November 6, 2019. List in formation*