





# Ethics in Journalism: A Conversation

Super Regional Meeting  
September 27, 2017

## Scenario #1

Congress is considering changes to the health care law, which critics say could make it harder for people with pre-existing conditions to get care. The host of your weekly news program has a brother with a pre-existing condition. The brother writes a well-reasoned argument about why the plan is a bad idea. The host wants to share it on his Facebook page. **Colleagues, by show of hands, should the program host share the brother's post?**

**Yes.** The host is not endorsing that viewpoint.

**No.** By sharing his brother's view, the host is giving his audience a reason to think that he cannot report on the topic objectively.

## Scenario #1 (continued)

Now let's say this wasn't a news program host, but the host of a socially conscious music show on your station. **What would you do in that case?**

- A.** Nothing. Listeners know music hosts aren't part of the news department.
- B.** Tell the host she can't make political pronouncements on social media.

## Scenario #2

Your news team is doing an in-depth series on oil production and because it isn't in the budget, sponsors need to be secured. The only sponsor that you secure is an oil and gas corporation. **Should the series proceed?**

**Yes.** The firewall is in place and the funder cannot influence the coverage.

**No.** One funder creates the perception of bias even if it does not exist.

## Scenario #3

A longtime donor sends you a strongly worded note, threatening to pull her major gifts because of the bias she perceives in a particular program. In her view, the coverage is not directly proportional to the demographics of the country, and overly represents the perspectives of diverse populations. **How do you respond?**

- A. Thank the donor and let her pull her funding.
- B. Try to engage with the donor.
- C. Punt to the NPR Ombudsman.

## Scenario #4

You're a university licensee undertaking a capital campaign to build a new studio. A celebrity alumnus has agreed to give a major grant to support the campaign. Delighted, the president of the university reaches out to encourage you to book the alumnus on a show. **What do you do?**

- A. Tell the president you can't feature the individual on the station but you will give the person a tour.
- B. Tell your show producer that the individual should be booked.

## Scenario #5

On Sept. 19, NPR reported that under the provisions of the Graham-Cassidy health care bill, “there would be no guarantee of coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.” The next day, Cassidy’s twitter account called out @NPR, saying that was “false.” **What should NPR do?**

- A. Ignore Cassidy’s claim.
- B. Have our Media Relations department issue a statement saying we stand by our reporting.
- C. Reply in a tweet that “No, @BillCassidy, you’re the one spreading falsehoods.”
- D. Something else.





**NPR**   
@NPR

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Sen [@BillCassidy](#) called our reading of his health care bill on pre-existing conditions false. Here's how we read it: [n.pr/2fAWevD](https://npr.org/2017/09/20/2fAWevD)

**Bill Cassidy** @BillCassidy

Replying to @NPR

@NPR FALSE. Under the bill, states must ensure that individuals with pre-existing conditions have access to adequate & affordable insurance.

9:27 AM - 20 Sep 2017

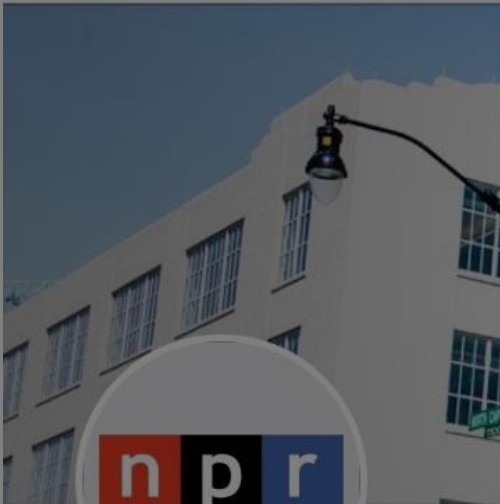
4,757 Retweets 5,615 Likes



416

4.8K

5.6K



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Joined April 2007



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

Replying to @NPR @BillCassidy

Prior to ACA, insurers routinely excluded care for cancer or mental health or made the coverage so expensive that it was out of reach

28 904 1.8K



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

Current law (ACA) guarantees coverage for 10 "essential health benefits"—in every exchange policy in every state [bit.ly/2wGO8qS](https://bit.ly/2wGO8qS)

14 700 1.6K



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

Those EHBs are central to pre-existing condition protections because they define what an insurance policy is required to cover

48 809 2.0K



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

#GrahamCassidy allows states to opt out of EHBs. That cld mean a person with diabetes can be charged extra for a plan with Rx drug coverage

19 931 1.7K



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

Allowing states to opt out of EHBs under #GrahamCassidy cld also mean a person w/ depression may not find a plan with mental health coverage

18 748 1.5K



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

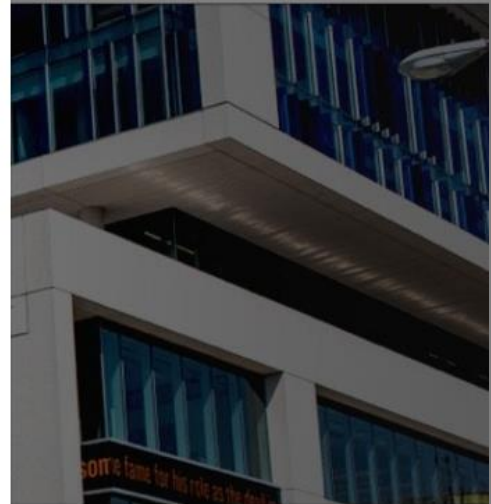
Sen. @BillCassidy says his bill ensures that people with pre-existing conditions have access to "adequate & affordable" coverage

49 493 1.1K



**NPR** @NPR · Sep 20

With no EHB requirements and no subsidies, "adequate" and "affordable" is left up to states and does not guarantee coverage



# Your Turn: Stump the Panel

Share your real -- or imagined -- journalistic ethical dilemmas for response by the panel.

