

Chesapeake AP Broadcasters Association Contest

2025 Contest Rules

The Chesapeake AP Broadcasters Association is an independent association comprised of local members of The Associated Press. All entries for the 2025 CAPBA contest will be submitted using an online platform accessible at <http://betternewspapercontest.com/2025-chesapeake>. Below are instructions for submitting entries. Contest information and rules can be found at <https://www.capba.net>. If you have questions please contact Heidi Brown at hbrown@ap.org or call 434.465.0285.

DEADLINE:

The contest opens Jan. 1, 2026. Entries must be submitted by 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2026

IMPORTANT: BetterBNC is optimized for the Google Chrome browser; and Firefox for PC and Macintosh/Apple. Please have a recent version downloaded and installed for the best contest experience.

Logging in for the first time:

How to Log In

- ❑ If this is the first time your station has logged into the system for this year's contest, you must select one contact who will be the primary person for submitting entries. That person is the "Contestant Manager." He or she must be the first person to log in for your station. After the Contestant Manager submits two entries, this person will be able to designate additional people who will be able to enter on behalf of the station. Those people will be called "Authorized Entrants."
- ❑ Visit <http://betternewspapercontest.com/2025-chesapeake> and click the "Enter the Contest Here" button or visit <https://betternewspapercontest.com>
- ❑ From the drop-down list select "2025 Chesapeake AP Broadcasters Association"
- ❑ If you are the Contestant Manager (the primary person who submits entries for your organization), check that option.
- ❑ In the Media Organization drop-down list, select your station name.

- ❑ If you are the Contestant Manager, the temporary password was provided to the email on record. If you did not receive it, please email me.
- ❑ The Contestant Manager will need to submit two entries. At that time, the BetterBNC system will email the primary contact to confirm your email address. There will be a link to click on in the confirmation email. If you do not see the email, check your junk mail or spam folder.
- ❑ After receiving the confirmation email and updating some general account information, the Contestant Manager can add the names and emails of anyone at the station who is eligible to submit entries. Those additional people would be considered “Authorized Entrants.” Authorized entrants are able to submit and pay for their own entries. They are unable to see what anyone else has submitted at your station.
- ❑ For problems logging in, contact Heidi Brown (hbrown@ap.org). ***Do not use the “contact us” link on the online platform.***

SUBMIT ENTRIES

- ❑ Click “Submit Entry” from the Manage Entries page
- ❑ Select the appropriate Division
- ❑ Select the appropriate Category
- ❑ Read the category note describing what is expected for the category’s entry content
- ❑ Enter the entry headline or title
- ❑ Add entry content (may vary by category)
 1. Written statements to support an entry may be added as a digital file attachment (other than audio/video). Click “Browse”, navigate to the desired file, and then click “Open”. Allowed file types are PDF, DOC/DOCX, TXT, JPG, GIF and PNG.
 2. To add web/audio/video content, copy and paste the content’s URL address into the provided Website URL field. To host your content online, either upload it to a free streaming content website (e.g. YouTube) or talk to your IT person about adding it to your stations/publications website. Make sure the content will be accessible online throughout the duration of the contest and awards process. Here are some examples of free streaming content websites where you can upload audio and video content:

- a. Audio: www.soundcloud.com, www.dropbox.com
- b. Video: www.youtube.com, www.vimeo.com

3. IMPORTANT: Please be sure that items are not behind a paywall or a password-protected area. If they are, you must provide username/password info in the Comments section of your entry. Judges may disqualify your entry if work samples are inaccessible.

- Enter credits

No more than three names may be included per entry. If more than three people are involved in producing the work the award will be presented to the news organization. Please do NOT enter "staff", "news team", or "news organization" for the credit name. Please either enter names or leave this blank.

- Click "Submit" and your entry will be submitted for judging. If you wish to review your entry click "Manage Entries." Click on "Edit" to make changes. When you are done making changes, click "Submit."
- For more detailed step-by-step instructions, go to: www.betterbncsupport.com

GENERAL RULES

- News organizations in Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia are eligible to enter the contest. All entries must have been aired or posted in 2025.
- One First and one Second Place award is made in each category. All entries will be judged, but it is the judge's discretion whether to name a winner when there is only one entry in a category. The finalists will be notified prior to the awards banquet, but whether they won First Place or Second Place will not be announced until the Awards Banquet on May 30, 2026, in Ocean City, Md.
- Stations are permitted to publicize that they have been named a finalist prior to the Awards Banquet.
- There is no limit to the number of entries that can be made in each category unless otherwise noted.
- There will be no multiple entering of the same entry in different categories.* However, it is acceptable to use portions of content in categories that require a compilation of work. For example, an entry for the Best Reporter category could include an excerpt from the Spot News category, as long as it was not duplicated in its entirety.

- ❑ For all entries, individual elements may not be re-edited and must appear as they did on air. Commercials and network material may be deleted.
- ❑ College stations have the option of competing in the college division with four categories, or remaining in the commercial divisions. You must choose one or the other. Please contact contest coordinator Heidi Brown at hbrown@ap.org to let her know which division you will be competing in.

RULES REGARDING GENERATIVE AI

(New for 2025)

CAPBA acknowledges the growing availability and use of tools that leverage generative artificial intelligence (AI) and recognize the potential benefit this technology can provide many of our members. As such, the following rules have been established with the goal of ensuring a fair and level playing field for all participants.

1. Entrants are required to sign a waiver about whether you have used AI in any part of your entry. This includes, but is not limited to: scripts, images, video, graphics, and audio. You must disclose and explain how it was used in your submission.
2. If the use of AI is suspected, judges may request supporting documentation, such as original scripts, rough-cuts, etc. in order to facilitate proper review. If it is determined that AI was used, but not disclosed, we will reject the submission.

The inclusion of the above rules does not require or guarantee the judges will award any entry that incorporates AI-generated content.

DIVISIONS (DETERMINED BY NIELSEN MARKET RANKINGS)

TV I / Large Market: TV stations licensed to cities and cable services that serve in Nielsen Markets 1-50 (Baltimore, Washington)

TV II / Small Market: TV stations licensed to cities and cable services that serve outside of the TV 1 Market (ranked 51 and above)

RADIO I/Metro: AM/FM, AM only or FM only and non-commercial radio stations licensed to cities in Nielsen Markets 1-50 (Baltimore, Washington)

RADIO II/Non-Metro: AM/FM, AM only or FM only and non-commercial radio stations licensed to cities outside the Radio I market (Annapolis and those ranked 51 and above)

COLLEGE Television or Radio: Station must be affiliated with a university/college and staffed by a majority of students. Material for entries submitted must have been produced for broadcast – over the air or online.

ENTRY FEES

**\$70 Fee Per Television Entry
\$40 Fee Per Radio Entry
\$20 Fee Per College Entry**

(Plus \$2.50 Per Entry PayPal Fee)

- Pay for Entries: Entry fees must be paid with a credit card directly through the BetterBNC site before the contest deadline.
 - When all entries are submitted, log into your account
 - Navigate to the Manage Entries page
 - Click “Calculate Entry Fees”
 - Follow the on-screen instructions to pay for your entries

CATEGORIES

COMBINED AWARDS (TV/RADIO):

BEST PODCAST-AUDIO: (*All divisions will compete against each other*). Entries should be an audio presentation no more than 30 minutes in length produced for online distribution. The podcast entry may include some material previously broadcast in addition to original content produced for online use.

BEST DIGITAL-FIRST STORYTELLING: SOCIAL VIDEO – Entry is a single or set of vertical videos created and edited specifically for social media audiences and distribution. Judges will consider graphics, layout, audience reception/engagement, and platform best practices. Notes should be added detailing audience engagement.

BEST MULTI-PLATFORM STORYTELLING: Entry demonstrates creative coverage of a story with clips that can include multimedia, documents, data, social or interactive elements to expand beyond a traditional broadcast piece. Show your experimental side -- give a synopsis of why you chose to illustrate the story this way and if it worked or not. Entries are limited to 10 minutes.

BEST OF SHOW AWARDS: The judges will nominate entries from this year's contest which they deem are the best of the best. The nominees must be the first place winner of their respective categories. A separate judging panel will select one winner from among the radio nominees and one from among the television nominees for the "Best in Show" honors. No formal entries are required.

COLLEGE TV AND RADIO CATEGORIES:

1. **OUTSTANDING GENERAL NEWS:** Coverage of a single event or topic. May include multiple entries not to exceed a total of five minutes.
2. **OUTSTANDING NEWSCAST:** Stations may enter a newscast from the 2025 calendar year. Entry limited to 60 minutes. Only one entry per station.
3. **OUTSTANDING FEATURE:** A single report highlighting a specific subject or perspective. Topics may be news, informational or lifestyle oriented. Criteria include significance, resourcefulness, creative writing, and effective use of audio and/or video. Entries limited to five minutes.
4. **OUTSTANDING SPORTS REPORTING:** Entries may include a single report, feature, or excerpts from a related series. Sportscasts are excluded. Entries limited to five minutes.

TELEVISION CATEGORIES:

1. **OUTSTANDING SPOT NEWS REPORTING:** Entries should consist of complete treatment of one spot news story. Entry is limited to 15 minutes.
2. **OUTSTANDING NEWS SERIES:** Entries should exhibit exceptional coverage of a single subject reported in series of reports in an unspecified number of segments. Entry is limited to 20 minutes.
3. **OUTSTANDING COVERAGE OF A CONTINUING STORY:** Entries should exhibit outstanding continuing coverage of a major developing story. Entry should include several reports. Entry is limited to 20 minutes.
4. **OUTSTANDING DOCUMENTARY OR IN-DEPTH REPORTING:** This award is offered for outstanding examples of in-depth coverage of a community problem or a significant news event. Entry may be a single report or a series of reports. Entry is limited to 30 minutes.
5. **OUTSTANDING YEAR-ROUND LOCAL SPORTS COVERAGE:** Entry should show one or more examples of the station's non-network coverage of sports during the contest year. Examples may include play-by-play, interviews, action, and excerpts from sports broadcasts, sports series or specials dealing with local sports, and so on. Individual elements may not be re-edited and fancy presentation production tapes should be avoided. Entry limited to 30 minutes. Only one entry per station.
6. **OUTSTANDING PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM OR SERIES:** This award is offered for outstanding examples of comprehensive, informed and effective television public service reporting. The entry may be either an instance of unusually thorough news or special coverage of an event of importance to the community served; or the effective presentation, through news and documentary stories, programs or series of stories and/or programs prepared by the station, of issues affecting the community's interest and well-being. Judges are instructed to pay particular attention to initiative, planning, and comprehensiveness of coverage, clarity, interest, vision and understanding in promoting the public welfare, usefulness and reaction in terms of goals sought. Entry/Clips limited to 45 minutes. Program does not have to be shown in its entirety; may be edited for time.
7. **BEST ENTERPRISE REPORTING:** An award to a reporter who in the opinion of the judges develops through his or her own initiative a news story with the most impact on the station's coverage area. The intention of this award is to recognize the reporter's enterprise in digging up a story that would not have been told without his or her effort. Entry limited to 15 minutes.
8. **OUTSTANDING SERIOUS FEATURE:** A single report taking on a serious local incident or issue that was the result of the station's journalistic efforts. Criteria are significance, resourcefulness, fairness and thoroughness of coverage. Entries should not include investigative reporting. Entries limited to 10 minutes.
9. **OUTSTANDING LIGHT FEATURE:** A single report highlighting a specific subject or perspective. Topics may be news, informational or lifestyle oriented. Criteria include significance, resourcefulness, creative writing, entertainment value, and effective use of audio and/or video. Entries limited to 10 minutes.

10. OUTSTANDING SPORTS FEATURE: Entries may be limited to a single report or may include excerpts from a related series. Entry limited to 15 minutes.

11. BEST TELEVISION PHOTOGRAPHY: This award is presented to a TV photojournalist who in the opinion of the judges has produced the best quality and imagination in capturing a story or stories on tape. Entries may be a single news story or several stories. Entry limited to 15 minutes.

12. BEST SPECIALTY REPORTING: Entries will be accepted from a beat reporter or reporting team in a specialist area, such as consumer, health, science, business, environment, education. Entries will be considered on the basis of how well they convey important information about a topic within a specialist area. The reporter or team must regularly cover this beat. Entry limited to 15 minutes.

13. BEST INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING: Entries must demonstrate original journalistic enterprise and clearly demonstrate research of documents, records and/or data. Entries are limited to 15 minutes and can be from a series of reports. A written statement explaining the investigation process is required.

14. BEST METEOROLOGIST OR WEATHERCASTER: Stations/individuals may enter a weathercast that aired on any date from January 1-December 31, 2025.

15. OUTSTANDING MORNING NEWSCAST: Stations may enter highlights from a morning weekday newscast that aired between 5am-7am on one of the following Contest Hit Days in 2025 – Mar. 27, Jul. 2, Oct. 10 or Dec. 8. Entry limited to 30 minutes. Only one entry per station.

16. OUTSTANDING LATE NEWSCAST: Stations may enter an evening newscast that aired 4pm or later on one of the following Contest Hit Days in 2025 – Mar. 27, Jul. 2, Oct. 10 or Dec. 8. Entry limited to 60 minutes. Only one entry per station.

17. OUTSTANDING WEEKEND NEWSCAST: Stations may enter a weekend newscast that aired on any Saturday or Sunday during the contest year, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2025. Entry limited to 30 minutes. Only one entry per station.

18. OUTSTANDING ELECTION NIGHT COVERAGE: Entries should show highlights of the station's election night (Nov. 4, 2025) coverage . Entries can include in-studio anchors, field coverage, and analysis of the election. Entry limited to 30 minutes.

19. OUTSTANDING POLITICAL COVERAGE: Individual story or series on a political topic. Entries limited to 15 minutes.

20. OUTSTANDING NEWS OPERATION OF THE YEAR: Entry will be judged on two factors:

- Written summary of the station's innovation and accomplishments in news during the year. Must include a description of its general news operation and state why it considers that operation the best in its division.
- Examples of the representative news programs or a raw composite of the individual stories or series. The examples may include tape submitted in other categories. Individual elements may not be re-edited and fancy presentation production tapes should be avoided. Entry limited to 30 minutes. Only one entry per station.

21. **OUTSTANDING WEBSITE:** This award will be given to a station which effectively uses its website to disseminate news and information. The website will be judged in real time, as judges will be asked to view each website on the same day. Criteria shall include overall appearance, news/sports content, ease of navigation, variety of information available, relevant links, interactivity, use of audio, video and other technologies, and whether it appears to be a valuable resource to the community served by the station. Entrants must generate their own news content, in addition to any content generated from providers such as wire services or networks. Entrants must submit the website address, and up to three URLs in the same domain (to highlight specific features or web pages from 2025 that are no longer "live", e.g. an election page). Only one entry per station.

22. **BEST REPORTER:** Entry should highlight an individual reporter's work during the year. Entry may include live and/or recorded single stories, spot news coverage, and/or other examples of how the reporter contributed to the news organization. Entry should demonstrate the reporter's ability to cover a story, including writing and execution. Entry is limited to 15 minutes.

23. **BEST MULTIMEDIA JOURNALIST:** For excellence by a single individual, covering a single or multi-part news story aired within a regularly scheduled television newscast or distributed as a video link on an AP member organization's website. The video journalist acts as a cross-discipline producer, serving as photojournalist, reporter, editor, talent, producer and web reporter for the story. A single story or composite may be entered. Entry is limited to 10 minutes.

24. **BEST TV NEWS ANCHOR:** This award recognizes the best overall performance by an individual news anchor featured on a local newscast. Entry should include a video montage representative of the entrant's on-air performance. It should include intro slate identifying the anchor. It may be edited and must not exceed 15 minutes. NOTE: Special effects are permitted ONLY if they were part of the original newscast that aired. Only what was originally broadcast should be on the recorded entry.

25. **BEST TV SPORTS ANCHOR:** This award recognizes the best overall performance by an individual sports anchor featured on local newscasts. Entry should include a montage representative of the entrant's on-air performance and field anchoring. Presentation may be edited and must not exceed 15 minutes. NOTE: Special effects are permitted ONLY if they were part of the original sportscast that aired. Only what was originally broadcast should be on the recorded entry.

26. **BEST PRODUCER:** This award recognizes exemplary producing by an individual, either of a single newscast or special program. To win this award, a producer must demonstrate creative, qualitative and meaningful use of the resources available, however large or small the market. Entry should demonstrate excellence in writing that conveys the significance of events to the viewer. Entries limited to 30 minutes without commercials. NOTE: Material entered in this category cannot be entered for Best Newscast. Only what was originally broadcast should be on the recorded entry.

RADIO CATEGORIES:

1. **OUTSTANDING SPOT NEWS REPORTING:** Entries should consist of complete treatment of one spot news story. Entry is limited to 15 minutes.
2. **OUTSTANDING NEWS SERIES:** Entries should exhibit exceptional coverage of a single subject reported in series of reports in an unspecified number of segments. Entry is limited to 20 minutes.
3. **OUTSTANDING COVERAGE OF A CONTINUING STORY:** Entries should exhibit outstanding continuing coverage of a major developing story. Entry should include several reports and is limited to 20 minutes.
4. **OUTSTANDING USE OF SOUND:** Entries should show creative use of sound to tell a story on radio. Entry must be exactly as heard on air and is limited to 10 minutes.
5. **OUTSTANDING DOCUMENTARY OR IN-DEPTH REPORTING:** This award is offered for outstanding examples of in-depth coverage of a community problem or a significant news event. Entry may be a single report or a series of reports. Entry is limited to 30 minutes.
6. **OUTSTANDING YEAR-ROUND LOCAL SPORTS COVERAGE:** Entry should show one or more examples of the station's non-network coverage of sports during the contest year. Examples may include play-by-play, interviews, action, and excerpts from sports broadcasts, sports series or specials dealing with local sports, and so on. Individual elements may not be re-edited and fancy presentation production tapes should be avoided. Entry limited to 30 minutes. Only one entry per station.
7. **OUTSTANDING EDITORIAL OR COMMENTARY:** Entries should show exceptional initiative or courage in presenting editorial comment on a specific issue. A single editorial will suffice, although a series on the same subject may be entered to illustrate an editorial campaign. Entry is limited to 15 minutes.
8. **OUTSTANDING PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM OR SERIES:** This award is offered for outstanding examples of comprehensive, informed and effective radio public service reporting. The entry may be either an instance of unusually thorough news or special coverage of an event of importance to the community served; or the effective presentation, through news and documentary stories, programs or series of stories and/or programs prepared by the station, of issues affecting the community's interest and well-being. Judges are instructed to pay particular attention to initiative, planning, and comprehensiveness of coverage, clarity, interest, vision and understanding in promoting the public welfare, usefulness and reaction in terms of goals sought. Entry/Clips limited to 45 minutes. Program does not have to be shown in its entirety; may be edited for time.
9. **BEST ENTERPRISE REPORTING:** An award to a reporter who in the opinion of the judges develops through his or her own initiative a news story with the most impact on the station's coverage area. The intention of this award is to recognize the reporter's enterprise in digging up a story that would not have been told without his or her effort. Entry limited to 15 minutes.

10. **OUTSTANDING SERIOUS FEATURE:** A single report taking on a serious local incident or issue that was the result of the station's journalistic efforts. Criteria are significance, resourcefulness, fairness and thoroughness of coverage. Entries should not include investigative reporting. Entries limited to 10 minutes.
11. **OUTSTANDING LIGHT FEATURE:** A single report highlighting a specific subject or perspective. Topics may be news, informational or lifestyle oriented. Criteria include significance, resourcefulness, creative writing, entertainment value, and effective use of audio. Entries limited to 10 minutes.
12. **OUTSTANDING SPORTS FEATURE:** Entries may be limited to a single report or may include excerpts from a related series. Entry limited to 15 minutes
13. **BEST SPECIALTY REPORTING:** Entries will be accepted from a beat reporter or reporting team in a specialist area, such as consumer, health, science, business, environment, and education. Entries will be considered on the basis of how well they convey important information about a topic within a specialist area. The reporter or team must regularly cover this beat. Entry limited to 15 minutes.
14. **BEST INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING:** Entries must demonstrate original journalistic enterprise and clearly demonstrate research of documents, records and/or data. Entries are limited to 15 minutes and can be from a series of reports. A written statement explaining the investigation process is required.
15. **OUTSTANDING NEWSCAST:** Stations may enter a regularly scheduled newscast that aired on one of the following dates in 2025 – Mar. 27, Jul. 2, Oct. 10 or Dec. 8. Only one entry per station. Entry limited to 30 minutes.
16. **OUTSTANDING WEEKEND NEWSCAST:** Stations may enter a weekend newscast that aired on any Saturday or Sunday during the contest year, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2025. Only one entry per station. Entry limited to 30 minutes.
17. **OUTSTANDING ELECTION NIGHT COVERAGE:** Entries should show highlights of the station's election night (Nov. 4, 2025) coverage . Entries can include in-studio anchors, field coverage, and analysis of the election. Entry limited to 30 minutes.
18. **OUTSTANDING POLITICAL COVERAGE:** Individual story or series on a political topic. Entries limited to 15 minutes.
19. **OUTSTANDING NEWS OPERATION OF THE YEAR:** Entry will be judged on two factors:
 - A. Written summary of the station's innovation and accomplishments in news during the year. Must include a description of its general news operation and state why it considers that operation the best in its division.
 - B. Examples of the representative news programs or a raw composite of the individual stories or series. The examples may include tape submitted in other categories. Individual elements may not be re-edited and fancy presentation production tapes should be avoided. Entry limited to 30 minutes. Only one entry per station.

20. **OUTSTANDING TALK SHOW:** Best example of a regularly-scheduled, locally originated, news-oriented talk show program. Entries limited to 30 minutes and must include listener call-in component. Commercial breaks should be deleted, but no other editing may be done. Entries can include a written summary.

21. **OUTSTANDING WEBSITE:** This award will be given to a station which effectively uses its website to disseminate news and information. The website will be judged in real time, as judges will be asked to view each website on the same day. Criteria shall include overall appearance, news/sports content, ease of navigation, variety of information available, relevant links, interactivity, use of audio, video and other technologies, and whether it appears to be a valuable resource to the community served by the station. Entrants must generate their own news content, in addition to any content generated from providers such as wire services or networks. Entrants must submit the website address, and up to three URLs in the same domain (to highlight specific features or web pages from 2025 that are no longer "live", e.g. an election page).

22. **BEST REPORTER:** Entry should highlight an individual reporter's work during the year. Entry may include live and/or recorded single stories, spot news coverage, and/or other examples of how the reporter contributed to the news organization. Entry should demonstrate the reporter's ability to cover a story, including writing and execution. Entry is limited to 15 minutes.

23. **BEST RADIO NEWS ANCHOR:** This award recognizes the best overall performance by an individual news anchor featured on a local newscast. Entry should include a montage representative of the entrant's on-air performance. The newscast should include intro identifying the anchor. Audio may be edited and must not exceed 15 minutes. NOTE: Special effects are permitted ONLY if they were part of the original newscast that aired. Only what was originally broadcast should be on the recorded entry.

24. **BEST RADIO SPORTS ANCHOR** -- This award recognizes the best overall performance by an individual sports anchor featured on local newscasts. Entry should include a montage representative of the entrant's on-air performance and field anchoring. Presentation may be edited and must not exceed 15 minutes. NOTE: Special effects are permitted ONLY if they were part of the original sportscast that aired. Only what was originally broadcast should be on the recorded entry.

Revised by CAPBA Board of Directors, November 2025