Freedom of the press is a cornerstone of American democracy protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

And it’s under attack.

At the highest levels of government, the press is denounced as “the enemy of the people,” and media outlets are derided as “fake news.”

But we’re fighting back.

Defend the First Amendment. Whether we are at a tiny weekly newspaper in Vermont or at the largest media conglomerate in the world, this is all our fight.

Jane Mayer of The New Yorker
NEFAC 2018 Hamblett First Amendment Award Recipient

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Affiliations appear for identification purposes only.
February | Filed an amicus brief in support of the public’s right to information about jurors. “Public access to juror information is a critical part of an open and transparent criminal justice system,” argued NEFAC.

January | Called on Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo to protect press rights in any legislation introduced to address revenge pornography, saying that even a well-intended bill could punish news organizations for publishing the news.

January | Launched First Amendment and the Free Press program, an educational initiative that brings legal and journalism experts to the region’s community centers, college campuses and high school classrooms.

April | Opposed a Vermont bill that would weaken the open meeting law and make it more difficult to obtain timely information: “Even small concessions can shift the focus away from the people’s right to know.”
How public records requests helped teens, but still so much to do

When Boston Latin Academy students Malia Córdova and Shane Clifton began researching ways to fund a new community center in Hyde Park, they turned to the state’s public records law. With the help of the Hyde Park Task Force, these teenagers studied the law to request information about long defunct city parks (they previously requested information about the old spaces to try to build playgrounds every year to benefit the city’s youngsters). “We sent letters to the TD Garden and the state. For weeks they wouldn’t respond at all,” explained. But they soon began winning. “That is how we were able to raise one penny for our project.”

NEFAC President Karen Bordeleau calls on all journalists to work together — despite competitive interests — to protect the First Amendment and demand government transparency.

May | Submitted an amicus brief in Rhode Island Superior Court contesting orders to keep secret a juror list and to bar public contact with the jurors in a completed, high-profile murder case.

April | Argued against the sealing of summary judgment filings in a federal court case involving the admissions practices of Harvard College, defending the “presumptively paramount right of the public to know the content of judicial records.”

September | Testified in support of expanding the Massachusetts public records law to include the state’s legislature, governor’s office and judiciary, saying the current statute “only covers a small fraction of the documents produced by state government.”

October | Coordinated a week-long celebration of free speech in Portland and Augusta that included a discussion on the future of the First Amendment and a public awareness campaign.

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GROWING INFLUENCE AND ADVOCACY

NEFAC is the region’s leading advocate for the First Amendment and the public’s right to know. Our commentary and programs are covered by the local, regional and national press, including The New York Times and Washington Post.

Our coalition’s efforts have been reported on hundreds of times with coverage increasing significantly nearly every year. In 2018, NEFAC appeared in the news on average more than twice a week.
New England First Amendment Coalition

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First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution