

Sharyl Attkisson, Investigative Journalist  
Formerly CNN, PBS CBS; Currently host of weekly news program: “Full Measure”  
Opening Statement

Thank you to Democrat and Republican members of this and the full committee — including previous iterations, which include over the past 24 years I’ve been in town— many deeply committed to a free press.

I remember a few years ago reporting on a story at CBS News. I always asked our lawyers to review my stories for legality and fairness. On this particular day, I was going over some documents with them provided by an inside source who exposed corporate wrongdoing. I had vetted the documents and gotten other sources to appear on camera.

The attorneys wanted to know— “If we’re challenged on this story in court, can we disclose the insiders’ name?”

I said, “No, he would lose his job, it would ruin him. Why?”

They explained that the law had been changing and it wasn’t to the benefit of journalists or our sources. They told me that we could no longer guarantee protection of the identity of our sensitive sources if challenged in court by, say, the company we were doing the story about.

“You would have to give up the name,” my lawyers told me.

“Or else what?” I asked.

“You’d probably go to prison,” they answered.

That made getting truthful information in the public’s interest — that much harder. I could no longer promise people who were willing to expose corporate or government wrongdoing that I could protect their identities at all costs.

Obviously, I’m just one reporter—multiply my experience by so many others. Here are just a few examples of stories I covered over the years that might not get told today because sources are threatened:

My investigation into fraud inside the Red Cross after all the 9/11 donations— which was recognized with an investigative Emmy award...was possible only with assistance from inside sources who provided me audits and information.

(Alleged waste, fraud or abuse of 9/11 donated funds July 29, 2002

[www.cbsnews.com/news/red-faces-at-the-red-cross/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/red-faces-at-the-red-cross/)

[www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/07/31/eveningnews/main517045.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/07/31/eveningnews/main517045.shtml))

Stories exposing wrongdoing within Ford and Firestone in covering up long-known, deadly tire dangers—another Emmy nominated investigation—might have gone untold.

Same with my investigations into Enron, Halliburton, prescription drugs and countless others. Stories that arguably led to taxpayer money and lives saved.

It was with help from inside intelligence sources, I broke the story at CBS of the Chinese stealing our most sensitive nuclear secrets. I was also able to break the news that the FBI lied about evidence against their suspect Wen Ho Lee. They claimed he'd failed his lie detector test when I obtained the polygraph and found out he'd passed with flying color.

Without the ability to protect confidential sources, I probably wouldn't have been able to report that when the CDC was alarming our nation about a swine flu epidemic... the vast majority of cases blamed on swine flu were not swine flu... or any sort of flu at all.

And I wouldn't have been able to break the stories about how BP and the government provided false information about how much oil was really leaking into the ocean after the BP oil spill.

In the past decade, we've seen the government attack sources with a zeal that should be applied to those committing the wrongdoing exposed. Instead, the wrongdoers are often protected—in some cases they're the ones prosecuting the whistleblowers.

The greatest offense a government insider can commit today is not, for example, improperly unmasking names of US citizens for political purposes... it's providing information of wrongdoing to a journalist... someone could go to jail over the so-called leak, but not the actual wrongdoing exposed.

And sadly, we now have ample evidence that bad actors in government will go shocking extremes, violating constitutional rights and possibly laws, to hunt down our sources.

In my case, I'm still litigating against the FBI and others connected to the intel community for their intrusions into my computers while I was at CBS. The honest, intel-connected sources who helped me discover this include a former FBI Unit chief.

The actions of the computer intruders, which we can trace forensically, imply they were desperate to learn who my sources are and what I might report. Talk about chilling— after that news became public, everyone from intelligence community sources to corporate whistleblowers have told me they hesitate to communicate with me because they believe I'm being monitored.

And nothing has happened to the computer intruders to this day; instead the Justice Department simply uses unlimited taxpayer money to fight my case in court.

In the big picture, I can't help but see all of this as part of a growing, organized effort to control a free press.

I'm concerned about new movements to force schools to teach "media literacy," and to invite third parties to "curate" our information and determine what's "fake news" and what's true.

My research shows these efforts are often the opposite of what they seem... the forces behind them are actually trying to shape public opinion by preventing us from seeing certain facts and views.

If these trends were in effect in the past, we might not now know that cigarettes are bad for you. The whistleblower wouldn't talk. The studies would be buried by algorithms at Google and Facebook because curators and media literacy experts would declare the research to be conspiratorial.

They'd point to settled science that shows cigarettes are perfectly safe—maybe even good for you. News outlets and reporters daring to pierce the narrative would be controversialized, bullied on social media, and forced out of their jobs.

Make no mistake: the ongoing government and corporate crackdown on whistleblowers, and journalists who report their stories is a war. Our truthful information threatens the persistent bureaucracy and powers-that-be like nothing else, and they are increasingly desperate to control information and narratives.

We can only guess what important stories in the public interest will never be told because of a less free press.

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement — “Truth in Testimony”**

Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5) and Committee Rule 16(a), non-governmental witnesses are required to provide the Committee with the information requested below in advance of testifying before the Committee. You may attach additional sheets if you need more space.

Name:

1. Please list any entity you are representing in your testimony before the Committee and briefly describe your relationship with each entity.					
Name of Entity	Your relationship with the entity				
2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
Recipient of the grant or contact (you or entity above)	Grant or Contract Name	Agency	Program	Source	Amount
3. Please list any payments or contracts (including subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015 from a foreign government, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
Recipient of the grant or contact (you or entity above)	Grant or Contract Name	Agency	Program	Source	Amount

I certify that the information above and attached is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

**Sharyl Attkisson**

Signature via electronic signature authorized

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

## Sharyl Attkisson

Sharyl Attkisson is a five-time Emmy Award winner and recipient of the Edward R. Murrow award for investigative reporting. She is author of two New York Times best sellers: “The Smear: How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think and How You Vote,” and “Stonewalled.” She is host of the Sunday morning national TV news program, Sinclair’s “Full Measure,” which focuses on investigative and accountability reporting.

Attkisson has delivered two popular TEDx talks: [Is Fake News Real?](#) (2017) and [Astroturf and Manipulation of Media Messages](#) (2015) that have drawn a [combined](#) 3.4 million views online.

For thirty years, Attkisson was a correspondent and anchor at CBS News, PBS, CNN and in local news.

In 2013, she received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for her reporting on “The Business of Congress,” which included an undercover investigation into fundraising by Republican freshmen. She received two other Emmy nominations in 2013 for “Benghazi: Dying for Security” and “Green Energy Going Red.” Additionally, Attkisson received a 2013 Daytime Emmy Award as part of the *CBS Sunday Morning* team’s entry for Outstanding Morning Program for her report: “Washington Lobbying: K-Street Behind Closed Doors.”

In September 2012, Attkisson received the Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Journalism and the RTNDA Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Investigative Reporting for the “Gunwalker: Fast and Furious” story.

Attkisson received an Investigative Emmy Award in 2009 for her exclusive investigations into TARP and the bank bailout. She received an Investigative Emmy Award in 2002 for her series of exclusive reports about mismanagement at the Red Cross.

Attkisson is one of the few journalists to have flown in a B-52 on a combat mission (over Kosovo) and in an F-15 fighter jet Combat Air Patrol flight. She is a fourth degree black belt in TaeKwonDo.

Previously, Attkisson hosted a medical news magazine on PBS called “HealthWeek,” anchored for CNN, and reported at several local news stations. She is a graduate of the University of Florida School of Journalism and Communications.

## **Awards List:**

### 2016

Finalist Gerald Loeb business awards for "Taxpayer Beware"

Barbara Olson Award for Excellence and Independence in Journalism

### 2015

Kenneth Y. Tomlinson Award for Outstanding Reporting

"Courage in the Face of Power" Award, Weyrich Awards

### 2014

Pillar Human Rights Journalism Award for "Fearless Reporting in the Face of Government Retaliation."

### 2013

Investigative Emmy Award for "Investigating Congress"

Investigative Emmy Award nomination for "Benghazi: Dying for Security"

Emmy Award nomination for "Green Energy Going Red."

Daytime Emmy Award as part of CBS Sunday Morning team Outstanding Morning Program for "Washington Lobbying: K-Street Behind Closed Doors."

Integrity in Journalism Award

Brian Terry Courage in Journalism and Reporting Award

Finalist, Gerald Loeb Business Awards for "The Business of Congress"

### 2012

Emmy Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for "Gunwalker: Fast and Furious."

RTNDA Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Investigative Reporting for "Gunwalker: Fast and Furious."

### 2011

Emmy Award Nomination for Investigations of Congress: "Follow the Money."

Emmy Award Nomination for Investigating Aid to Haiti earthquake victims.

### 2010

Emmy Award for Outstanding Investigative Reporting of a Business News Story for series on the Bush Administration's Bait-and-Switch on TARP and the Bank Bailout.

Investigative Reporter and Editors Finalist Award for "Investigating TARP."

Loeb finalist for Television Breaking News for "Follow the Money: Bailout Investigation."

2009

Emmy Award Nomination for "Follow the Money."

2008

RTNDA-Edward R. Murrow Award for Overall Excellence (CBS team award)

Finalist for Gerald Loeb business awards for "Earmarks"

2005

RTNDA-Edward R. Murrow Award for Overall Excellence (CBS team award)

2003

Emmy Award Nomination for Investigating Dangers of certain prescription drugs and vaccines; and conflicts of interest in medical industry.

2002

Emmy Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for series on mismanagement at the Red Cross: "Red Cross Under Fire."

2001

Emmy Award Nomination for "Firestone Tire Fiasco."

Civil Justice Foundation Special Commendation for Firestone Tire coverage.

2000

Investigative Reporter and Editors Finalist Award for series on the dangers of certain prescription drugs and vaccines.

Attkisson received several other awards for her reporting and producing, including a New York Black Journalists Association public service award, a Mature Media National Award, a Florida Emmy Award, a Sigma Delta Chi Award and a Florida Communicator's Award.