

Kathleen Kirby to Receive First Amendment Award for Leadership in the Broadcast & Digital Industry

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Kathleen A. Kirby, partner and co-chair of the Media Practice at Wiley Rein LLP, has been selected to receive the prestigious 2015 First Amendment Leadership Award from the Radio Television Digital News Foundation (RTDNF), the educational arm of the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA). The Leadership Award is one of a handful of First Amendment Awards given annually to a select group of journalists and leaders in the broadcast community, honoring their support and advancement of freedom of the press. The awards will be presented at a ceremony at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, DC on March 11, 2015.

“I am humbled to receive this honor,” said Ms. Kirby. “Throughout my career, it has been my privilege to serve as an advocate for and counselor to electronic journalists, particularly local broadcasters whose news coverage is so integral to their communities. I am proud to have been a part of RTDNA and RTDNF’s dedication to freedom of the press and their efforts to promote First Amendment values for more than two decades. As someone who simply puts the law at the service of those who gather and report the news, I am truly honored to be included among a group of individuals whose efforts have advanced the craft and reminded us all about the importance of a free press in our democratic society, including two who lost their lives brutally.”

Other RTDNF First Amendment Award winners for 2015 include James Risen, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for The New York Times; Ann Compton, a distinguished and highly respected veteran of the White House press corps; and Perry Sook, president and CEO of Nexstar.

Related Professionals

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Practice Areas

Telecom, Media & Technology
First Amendment/Commercial Speech
Media

The foundation will also honor journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff with the RTDNF Citation of Courage, a new award presented in recognition of distinguished service to journalism and the extraordinary courage to face danger and, ultimately, their own deaths in search of the truth.

“Our honorees are true champions of press freedom,” said Chris Carl, chairman of RTDNF. “Each of them has demonstrated outstanding support of the First Amendment through their work and their commitment to excellence.”

“We are proud to recognize the tireless dedication of this year's recipients,” added Mike Cavender, RTDNF executive director. “From the board room to the courtroom and from the White House Press Room to our living rooms, they embody the values of a free press in our society.”

Ms. Kirby's practice includes First Amendment advocacy before Congress and the Federal Communications Commission, and she also represents media clients on a host of business, transactional, and regulatory issues. She is a recipient of RTDNA's Rob Downey Citation, an inductee into the National Freedom of Information Hall of Fame, and serves on the Media Institute's First Amendment Advisory Council, as well as on the faculty for the Practising Law Institute's annual Communications Law program in New York. She has held leadership positions with both the Federal Communications and American Bar Associations, and has served as First Amendment counsel to RTDNA since 1994.

Prior recipients of the First Amendment Leadership Award that Ms. Kirby will receive next year include David Lougee, president of the Broadcasting Division for Gannett Co., and Robert Decherd, who served as chairman of the board, president, and chief executive officer of A. H. Belo Corporation from 1987 to 2013.

The RTDNA is a U.S.-based membership organization of radio, television, and online news directors, producers, executives and educators. Its functions include promoting journalistic ethics and preserving broadcast journalists' free speech rights.

The RTDNF is a charitable and educational group that supports protecting First Amendment freedoms and rights to free and unfettered media. It also provides thousands of dollars in scholarships each year to journalists of the future and provides training to entry-level and experienced media professionals.