

THE CAP TIMES

Oct. 28, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my privilege and pleasure to nominate Jack Kelly for the Wisconsin Newspaper Association's "Rookie Reporter of the Year" award.

Jack joined the Capital Times on Sept. 2, 2021 and has excelled since day one — so much so that I frequently forget how early he is in his journalism career.

In his role as our political reporter, Jack is charged with covering state politics and public policy — from the state Capitol to the campaign trail. Although he reports to me, we function more than anything as a team.

Jack brings unparalleled energy, enthusiasm and drive to the job. He pitches thoughtful story ideas and follows through on them, but also graciously accepts the obligatory assignments that come with the beat. He also actively pursues opportunities to innovate the way we present political news to our audience, and has been integral to the reinvention and growth of our weekly politics newsletter — which has added over 1,000 new subscribers since we launched it.

I couldn't have asked for a better teammate to cover Wisconsin politics. Jack has an innate understanding of the state's political environment, but is also eager to learn and grow as a reporter. He isn't afraid to take on challenging stories, and he puts in the necessary work — whether it's building source relationships, sifting through piles of data or combing through records — to do them justice.

In addition to writing longform stories that profile elected officials on both sides of the aisle and offer context to current political debates, Jack has also broken significant news on several occasions. Through an open records request, he was the first to report that a meeting with U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson and top state Republican lawmakers was held, at least in part, to discuss dismantling the Wisconsin Elections Commission. He also secured the scoop that then-U.S. Senate candidate Sarah Godlewski was ending her campaign and endorsing Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes in the Democratic primary.

And while Jack has the skills, talent and confidence to regularly report excellent stories on his own, he also seeks opportunities to collaborate with his Cap Times coworkers, finding ways to work together on topics that cross beat lines.

In a short time, Jack has made himself a key member of the Cap Times team. I offer my most enthusiastic recommendation for him to receive this award.

Jessie Opoien
Capitol Bureau Chief
Cap Times