

# POLITICO named to Pulitzer Board

By [MICHAEL CALDERONE](#) | 12/7/09 12:12 PM EST  
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Columbia University announced Monday that POLITICO Executive Editor Jim VandeHei has been elected to the Pulitzer Prize Board.

VandeHei, who co-founded POLITICO in early 2007, becomes the first member of the Pulitzer Board from a primarily online news outlet. The print edition of POLITICO is distributed daily in Washington when Congress is in session.

“In many ways, the Pulitzer Board is on the same mission as POLITICO: to embrace new media while fighting to protect the highest standards for writing, reporting and accuracy. I am honored to be a part of this effort,” VandeHei said.

At 38, VandeHei has worked his way through the ranks of Washington journalism — both old and new — beginning with alternative fuels newsletter “New Fuels Report” in 1995, followed by the now-defunct newsletter “Inside the New Congress.”

VandeHei next became a congressional correspondent for Roll Call, before heading to The Wall Street Journal in 1999. There, he covered both Capitol Hill and the first year of George W. Bush’s presidency. In 2002, he joined The Washington Post and ended up working under political editor John F. Harris, who later became co-founder and editor-in-chief of POLITICO.

While VandeHei clearly has old media credentials, it’s his current new media experience that serves as another indication the Pulitzer Board is increasingly embracing online journalism.

Since 1999 — when the Pulitzer Board first allowed online content in entries, albeit only from newspapers — there has been continued improvement in permitting online journalism to be considered for the industry’s most prestigious award.

Last year, the board made a major decision to allow entries from online-only publications — that included sites like MinnPost, Voice of San Diego and the Washington Independent. However, sites allowed to compete had to be “primarily dedicated to original news reporting and coverage of ongoing events.” So that would have excluded sites like The Huffington Post, which include original reporting along with primarily aggregation and links to outside sources.”

But this past week, the Pulitzer Board further loosened the rules for online entries.

Columbia journalism professor Sig Gissler, who administers the Pulitzer prizes, said that the requirement may have excluded some online columnists, critics and bloggers. Now, he said, “the focus is on the entry more than the mission.”

“We got a great deal of applause last year,” Gissler said of reaction from the online community, “and we got more this year because it does broaden the competition.”

Indeed, there were some enthusiastic responses after last week’s announcement.

“Joseph Pulitzer should be pleased that the award bearing his name is steadily finding its way into new media,” wrote Burst Media chief executive Jarvis Coffin on The Huffington Post. “It seems certain that if he were here, he’d be blogging.”

Scott Bosley, executive director of the American Society of News Editors, also applauded the board’s decision, telling The Associated Press that it’s “a logical way of adapting to the change in the landscape.”

Pulitzer entries go to juries in March, and then the 19-member board makes the final deliberations.

Gissler described VandeHei — the only addition this year — as a “bright, talented journalist, who given his new media background, would add to the mix of backgrounds and outlooks on the board.”

Board members serve for a three-year term, with a maximum of three total terms. Some top newspaper editors, executives and writers are currently on the board, including Jim Amoss, editor of The Times-Picayune of New Orleans; Kathleen Carroll, executive editor of The Associated Press; Paul Gigot, editorial page editor of The Wall Street Journal; and Thomas Friedman, columnist for The New York Times.

Gissler pointed out that the board not only judges the nation’s top newspaper journalism but also weighs in on the arts, including books, music and drama.

“When you win a Pulitzer,” Gissler said, “you’re in the aristocracy of excellence.”