

# Aaron M. Kessler

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## SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

- 15 years of experience as an investigative and beat reporter covering a range of complex government and business subjects, including health care, finance, technology, transportation, housing, defective products, education and politics
- Exceptional writing and editing skills, with ability to both craft long-form narratives and breaking news stories on deadline
- Strong track record of shoe-leather reporting and source development resulting in exclusive investigations and scoops
- Possess a rich network of sources within executive branch agencies, legislative committees, state government officials, political groups, public policy and consumer advocate organizations, companies and law firms
- Extensive experience negotiating for and obtaining documents and data through public records laws
- Industry-leading data analysis/data science skills, including ability to use, manage and analyze data in a wide variety of programs including R, Python, ArcGIS, Datawatch Monarch, SQL Server, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Tableau, Nuix, Excel
- Expertise using data analysis and coding to fuel complex, exclusive investigative stories
- Ability to lead data-driven visualization experiences that bridge the gap between technical and editorial teams
- Expertise translating data and numbers into accessible, understandable narrative-driven stories
- Exceptional news judgment and ability to excel, collaborate and delegate in a fast-paced environment
- Certified Scrum Master (CSM)
- Regular speaker and investigative journalism trainer at national workshops and conferences

## EDUCATION

M.S., Columbia University School of Journalism/Columbia Business School, New York, N.Y., May 2014

*2013-14 Knight-Bagehot Fellow in Business & Economics Journalism, full-tuition plus stipend for year of MBA coursework*

M.A., University of Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, Mo., May 2004

B.A., Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., May 2001

## RECENT EXPERIENCE

**CNN**

Washington, D.C.

Nov. 2016-Oct. 2019

**Senior Producer**

- Report, write and analyze data for investigative and shorter-turn stories, including environmental, pharmaceutical, judicial and politics projects, as well as multiple Trump administration rolling investigations of Scott Pruitt and admin officials
- Lead efforts to use data analysis to cover politics, the 2020 campaign and investigating the Trump administration
- Develop data-driven stories on topics ranging from corporate and government malfeasance, to executive agency and White House irregularities and financial ties, to campaign finance, opioid abuse, immigration and environmental policies
- Oversee the successful development of CNN's first in-house campaign finance database to allow for exclusive stories
- Manage effort to bring text analysis and machine learning to bear for reporting efforts, including building and analyzing extensive document collections such as federal agency email communications, Supreme Court nominee historical records
- Develop and build software for the newsroom to aid in election/political coverage, including presidential candidate travel tracker, House district demographic/election results database and internal reports, 2020 fact check project application, Trump financial disclosure, White House salary comparisons, Trump "falsehood" tracker application
- Coordinate data reporting efforts between beat teams and digital/TV divide to increase collaboration across traditional silos
- Initiate and develop collaborative relationship between the newsroom and the company's Atlanta-based data science team to fuel innovative ways to pursue investigations, such as for election security and opioid-related projects
- Lead in-house training sessions and mentor DC bureau colleagues on investigative and data journalism techniques

**Scripps Washington Bureau**

Washington, D.C.

Nov. 2015-Nov. 2016

**National Investigative Producer**

- Conducted investigative reporting and data analysis for national stories out of the Scripps Washington bureau, including award-winning probes of corruption and illegal opioid prescriptions at a Veterans Administration facility
- Responsible for cultivating key sources within the DEA that allowed us to report on illegal prescriptions by VA official
- Investigated and built a cross-border database of all physicians cited for medical misconduct in the U.S. and Canada that uncovered serious abuses by doctors who then fled to another state, or to Canada, and kept practicing

**The New York Times**

Washington, D.C.

June 2014-Nov. 2015

**Business/Automotive Writer (Full-Time Contractor)**

- Covered legislation, regulation and technology related to autos/transportation, and produced rolling investigations related to dangerous auto defects, fault guardrails and other topics as one what's known at the NYT as a "super-stringer" (a de facto

additional reporter hand-picked by the business editor but who isn't technically a staffer)

- Wrote, developed sources and/or produced stories and original reporting scoops on a daily basis
- Reported on Congressional committees and executive agencies including NHTSA, EPA, FHWA, FCC and Treasury
- Broke news and produced rolling investigative/enterprise stories on auto safety, technology and environmental issues
- Investigated faulty guardrails and exposed cover-ups related to their dangerous use on American highways
- Covered the six-week federal trial of former AIG chief Hank Greenberg, who sued the U.S. government over the bailout
- Shot and produced video for the NYT's website as well as their social platforms

**100Reporters**

Washington, D.C.

Nov. 2011-July 2013

**Staff Writer**

- Wrote stories and conducted data analysis for projects related to domestic and international corruption
- Investigated powerful K Street lobbyists who worked for abusive foreign dictators to whitewash their crimes and gain influence among members of Congress and executive officials
- Reported on Wall Street firm's suspicious involvement with palm oil plantations in Cameroon

**Sarasota Herald-Tribune**

Sarasota, Fla.

Dec. 2007-March 2011

**Business Reporter**

- Covered residential real estate, including pricing trends, the mortgage crisis, white-collar crime and other issues related to the housing market's collapse and subsequent attempt to recover
- Broke scoops and produced investigative numerous stories involving fraud and corruption, including contaminated Chinese drywall used to build thousands of U.S. homes, mortgage fraud schemes and real estate auction scams
- Produced more than 100 stories as part of a rolling investigation into Chinese drywall
- Covered the federal multi-district litigation in New Orleans surrounding the defective drywall, and successfully developed sources among the attorneys and advocates for both sides – as well as the presiding federal district judge himself
- Conceptualized and collaborated on building out interactive web experiences to accompany stories

**Charlottesville Daily Progress**

Charlottesville, Va.

June 2006-June 2007

**Education Reporter**

- Reported on the University of Virginia, including its legislative priorities, budgets and scientific research operations
- Successfully won a public records fight to pry loose the names of thousands of elite university donors
- Investigated procurement spending, lobbying efforts and medical abuse at UVA facilities

**SELECTED HONORS/AWARDS**

- Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism (Two-time finalist)
- Society of American Business Editors & Writers Best in Business Award (Two-time winner, including for investigations)
- Livingston Award for Young Journalists (Finalist)
- Society of Environmental Journalists Kevin Carmody Award for Outstanding In-depth Reporting (Winner)
- Society of Professional Journalists Green Eyeshade Award for Southern-based Reporters (Winner)
- Florida Society of News Editors Award (Two-time winner)
- RTNDA Edward R. Murrow Award, regional (Winner)
- NATAS Emmy Award, regional (one of three reporters on winning submitted stories for investigations)
- Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by ProPublica and the Herald-Tribune