



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Secrecy vs. Transparency

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 3, 2023 at 8:00 AM

To: aholan@poynter.org

Cc: [REDACTED]

Dear Angie Drobnic Holan,
(cc Deirdre Gonsalves)

As you are no doubt aware, the International Fact-Checking Network presents itself as a champion of transparency.

But there are ways that the IFCN could improve its transparency along with its role in giving people the facts about how it tries to ensure accountability among its signatory organizations.

Case in point: Here's one corner of [a formal complaint filed about two weeks ago](#):



Complaint - PolitiFact

Not Approved

Info

Complainant: **Bryan W. White (zebrafactcheck@gmail.com)**

Signatory (Complainees): **PolitiFact**Reached Out To Signatory: **Yes**Created: 20-Jul-2023 (**2 weeks ago**)

The linked submission form looks exactly as it did two weeks ago, save for the "2 weeks ago" updating over time. It's marked "Not Approved" just as it was at the start. So, that could mean nobody has read the complaint or somebody has read the complaint and rejected its validity.

Some formal complaints receive the mark of "Approved" and never receive a "Resolved" mark. What does that mean?

That's not transparency. It's secrecy through ambiguity.

It would improve transparency about the accountability process if the IFCN were to mark the forms as unread until they're read, and put "Not Approved" only after review. And, maybe sit down for this one, it would improve transparency all the more if the reviewer shared the reason for withholding approval by writing it on the form.

While I can't say I am totally surprised at the continued lack of transparency at the IFCN--particularly not bothering to offer any reply at all to most emails--you must be aware that it's not a good look. Why not cooperate in fixing errors made by fact checkers? Why not try to improve the accountability system? Burying cases of code transgression makes the IFCN appear secretive and stimulates curiosity about what motivates the IFCN to keep the cards of accountability so close to its chest.

You need transparency to achieve earned trust. Earned trust beats the methods favored by advertisers.

Start earning some trust for the sake of the IFCN, won't you?

I'll eagerly await your reply.

--

Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
editor
zebrafactcheck.com