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# Angie Drobnic Holan, MLIS '10, Holds Their Feet to the "Fire"

By Elizabeth Engasser, Class of 2015

When tasked with making the decision for what was named the "Lie of the Year" for 2013, PolitiFact Managing Editor Angie Drobnic Holan chose something she felt had the largest impact on the nation: President Obama's promise that Americans can keep their insurance plans under new health care laws.

"It's been interesting to see (the Affordable Care Act) evolve and what it's meant," Holan said. "The polls show that a lot of people don't understand the health care laws. They don't know what's in it and they don't know what it means for them, and it's a very complicated law that affects the health care sector in different ways. It affects individual people in a lot of different ways. So with our fact checks we're trying to explain it and trying to put it in perspective."

Holan became a reporter at the *Tampa Bay Times* in 2005. In 2007, she joined PolitiFact, a project created by the *Tampa Bay Times* to expose the truth in politics, and was one of the founding reporters who helped launched the Pulitzer Prize winning website.

"It was born out of an idea," Holan said. "We just wanted a new and distinctive way to cover elections and we also felt that politics wasn't fact checked often enough."

She worked her way up through the project, working as editor of PolitiFact Florida and then deputy editor of the national site. She was promoted to managing editor of PolitiFact last October. Holan said her Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from USF has been invaluable to her during her work with PolitiFact.

"Library and Information Science gives you a background to understand how information is organized, how to access the information, how to define your search parameters, so it's enormously helpful for any task that you need specialized information," Holan said. "I think that's what librarians really are; they're guides to help people find the information they need. I say librarians have this wonderful ethos of making sure that information is

available, which is very similar to the First Amendment freedoms that journalists really treasure."


Holan said she enjoys her work at PolitiFact because she gets the chance to inform the public on serious policies and issues they may not otherwise know about.

"We get to write about some of the really important policy issues, and we write about them from a very serious perspective," Holan said. "We have the Truth-O-Meter which is kind of fun and funny, but I think people understand the Truth-O-Meter doesn't really exist. The Truth-O-Meter is the final element on a story that is usually a very long, detailed policy story about the important issues of the day. So even if the reader might disagree with one of our ratings, hopefully they read the whole story and they learn something about the policy and the background behind it."

The statement PolitiFact named as the "biggest lie of the year" in 2013 was made by President Obama 37 times since 2009, and was deemed false in 2013 when insurance companies began sending out policy cancellation letters because their plans no longer met the requirements implemented by new health care laws.

"With the Internet we can fact check quickly," Holan said. "One thing we've noticed with PolitiFact is that the closer that you can fact check something to when it was said, the more impact the fact check has, as far as either confirming correct knowledge or debunking inaccurate statements."

At PolitiFact, Holan said she is constantly working to provide the truth to the public and give them the information they need to govern themselves and for the nation to maintain its democracy.

"As a journalist I get to learn new things every day and uncover new information for myself that I get to share with everyone else," Holan said. "So I think it's a valuable profession in any democratic society and as a journalist. I get to be a lifelong learner, which is very satisfying." 



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