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Society of Professional Journalists: Reporters Shouldn't Use Pejorative Terms Like "Illegal Immigrant"

The best news I've seen this week is the Society of Professional Journalist's [new recommendation](#) that reporters stop using the phrases "illegal immigrant" and "illegal alien" in describing undocumented immigrants. The SPJ resolution describes "illegal immigrant" as "politically charged" and it says "illegal alien" is "offensive and bureaucratic."

"Only the court system, not reporters and editors, can decide when a person has committed an illegal act," the resolution says.

It's hard to think of any other examples of news organizations using pejorative terminology to describe groups of people, and ordinarily the media are especially careful when describing members of unpopular minority groups. Using objective language is the first step to thinking clearly about a subject, and SPJ's resolution gives me hope that we're moving toward a rational immigration debate.