

Keep Communities Informed by Saving the News Industry

Americans are turning to local, regional and national press in record numbers for life-saving information, related to public health and school and business closures that are specific to communities. We all depend on having the most up-to-date and reliable information available, and it's our local newspapers, TV, and radio stations that deliver it.

Local press, like other small businesses, are facing challenges amid this pandemic. Many outlets have lowered digital paywalls to provide COVID-19 coverage for free. At the same time, as retailers across the country close their doors and events are canceled in support of social distancing efforts, ad revenue for many media outlets are dropping precipitously. Further, the huge surge in unemployment and underemployment creates a risk that some customers will have no choice but to drop subscriptions as they seek to make ends meet. This revenue loss is already devastating local news coverage.

The news industry fell into financial crisis long before the coronavirus pandemic began. Over 2,000 newspapers have been lost since 2004 due to mergers or shutdowns, resulting in tens of thousands of job losses. Those numbers now threaten to expand significantly as news outlets across the country have cut staff significantly and furloughed employees. Some have reduced publication and distribution, or stopped publishing altogether.

As Americans across the country look to their local and regional news sources for information in the midst of this pandemic, it's more important than ever that we keep local news strong. There is currently a bipartisan effort in the Senate to include local news outlets in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). ***The Local News and Emergency Information Act (S. 3718)*** would make local newspapers, radio stations and TV broadcasters eligible for the PPP established in the CARES Act. The funding would have to be used to produce

local news, information or emergency information, and to keep local journalists and those who support them on the job.

The furloughs and layoffs of these essential workers are diminishing all Americans' ability to find out what's happening in our communities, to access life-saving public health information, and to hear the latest about plans to rebuild. We cannot afford to lose reporters from newsrooms, especially as they play such an important role in keeping the public informed and safe. The Senate must vote to enact the *Local News and Emergency Information Act* so that the news industry can keep communities connected during this pandemic.