

Rebuild Local News

July 22, 2020

Dear Members of Congress,

The undersigned represent more than 5,000 local news organizations, journalism funders, reporters and advocacy groups -- including major daily newspapers, weeklies, local news websites, nonprofit newsrooms, rural papers, Black newspapers, Hispanic newspapers, public radio stations, news startups and newspapers that have been around for hundreds of years.

We have come together because local news in America is collapsing. Even before COVID-19, the number of reporters had declined [60 percent](#) since 2000. Some [1,800 communities](#) have no local news source at all. Since COVID-19, the situation has gotten much, much worse. Scores of publications have already shut down; hundreds more are on the edge. Some [36,000](#) journalists have been laid off, furloughed or had their pay cut since the pandemic began.

This collapse of local news -- core to a healthy and strong democracy -- would be terrible under the best of times, but right now it also means that communities cannot combat COVID-19. Some 57 percent of counties with COVID cases as of April 2020 had no daily newspaper, according to a study by the [Brookings Institution](#). The problems are especially acute in rural areas and communities of color. Trustworthy and fact-based information -- accurate journalism -- saves lives.

Misinformation is spreading rapidly. About half of Americans report that they've seen made-up news about COVID-19, according to a [PEW Research Center study](#).

Americans trust local news -- and need it now more than ever.

Fortunately, there is an excellent, bipartisan piece of legislation that would help local news organizations survive, HR 7640, **Local Journalism Sustainability Act**, introduced by Representatives Anne Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) and Dan Newhouse (R-WA). Through tax credits, it would provide small businesses with funds to advertise with local media; that would help save newsrooms and help small businesses get back on their feet. Another provision of the bill provides Americans with money to subscribe to newspapers or give donations to local nonprofit news organizations. The third provision provides tax incentives to hire or retain local journalists.

Citizens get better information; newsrooms get to retain reporters; Main Street businesses get help reaching out to customers about reopening safely. These are cost effective, common sense ideas. that lets consumers and local businesses decide for themselves whom to support.

We especially like these approaches because they provide significant help to local newsrooms but rely mostly on consumers and businesses, not the government, to decide which newsrooms to support.

Saving local news can't wait until 2021. We strongly urge you to support the inclusion of HR 7640, the Local Journalism Sustainability Act, or similar policies to support newsrooms, in the next COVID-19 funding relief bill or other funding measures in this Congress.

Sincerely,

National Newspaper Association

America's Newspapers

Institute for Nonprofit News

Local Independent Online News

National Assoc. of Hispanic Publishers

Seattle Times

Am. Federation of Community

Broadcasters

News Media Alliance

Society of Professional Journalists

American Journalism Project

Solutions Journalism Network

Report for America / GroundTruth

Project

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

Salt Lake Tribune

Chalkbeat

Contact: Steven Waldman, President, Report for America, swaldman@reportforamerica.org, and coordinator for the [Rebuild Local News](#) coalition.