

# America's Newspapers

WWW.NEWSPAPERS.ORG

## Fighting for short and long-term legislative priorities for newspapers



**D**uring this pandemic, America's Newspapers has been taking the message to Congress and the public that urgent action is needed to provide relief to the nation's struggling local newspapers.

We're on the verge of winning one battle in this legislative campaign. The third stimulus package, the \$3 trillion Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, or HEROES Act, introduced by U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, was approved by the House May 15. While this version of the HEROES Act was described as being dead on arrival in the Senate, there almost certainly will be a new stimulus package, and expanding PPP loan opportunities to more newspapers are likely to be part of the package.

This act includes something America's Newspapers, in partnership with the News Media Alliance and other organizations representing local news providers, has been asking for since the beginning of the pandemic quar-

antine: An affiliation waiver that would allow more newspapers to qualify for forgivable Small Business Administration loans under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) by allowing local news publishers to apply as indi-

vidual, independent entities even if they are owned by larger group publishers.

America's Newspapers is also asking that the Trump Administration direct current federal government advertising funds to local news and media outlets. These public service and informative ads could be similar to the ones running right now about the U.S. Census. They could carry critical government information about data from the CDC, access to small business loans, medical resources for families and other important topics. We're asking for a commitment that would be spent in an equitable manner across all local news providers.

We also believe there should be an immediate relief package that is based on total newsroom employees. Some local news organizations won't survive without some type of immediate grant or infusion that is tied to the number of the organization's employees who directly work in the newsroom.

In our messaging to legislators and the public, we have emphasized this is not a "bailout" for the newspaper industry. Instead, these measures recognize that local news publishers are on the information front line of the coronavirus pandemic, providing a public service to our communities.

**AMERICA'S NEWSPAPERS** believes one good first step for the long term is the Journalism Competition and Preser-

vation Act, which has been introduced in both chambers of Congress on a bipartisan basis and will start to address the inequities in how quality journalism is treated and valued by the Big Tech platforms Google and Facebook.

Most immediately, we have urged our members to reach out to their congresspersons to support the HEROES Act and for them to run editorials about the importance of federal relief for local news publishers.

In an editorial that was offered free to any newspaper or news publisher — and that is still available at newspapers.org, America's Newspapers CEO Dean Ridings framed our appeal to the public this way:

"Your local newspaper provides the news and information unique to your community... But your access to local news and information is gravely threatened by the economic carnage COVID-19 has wrought.

"While local newspapers continue to field reporters and bring news and advice from public health authorities in print and online — at considerable cost — their revenues have all but disappeared as the businesses that were their most important advertisers were shuttered. That's why America's Newspapers and other organizations representing local news providers are asking Congress to take urgent action to ensure you don't lose your vital sources of timely and trustworthy information."

## America's Newspapers' legacy informs its future

**WELCOME TO** the America's Newspapers section of Editor & Publisher. It's hard to believe that only seven months ago America's Newspapers was created by the merger of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and the Inland Press Association. In that time, our industry — and world — have changed drastically, and we have certainly changed with it. We've identified four areas of focus for the new organization:

**MARKETING AND PROMOTION:** We will produce ongoing campaigns promoting the value of newspapers with print and

digital marketing materials. More than 1,000 newspapers participated in the first campaign — "Newspapers Have Your Back" — making this one of the most successful newspaper promotions ever.

**ADVOCACY:** COVID-19 has exacerbated forces already in play created by the unequal playing field of Google and Facebook, so we're now advocating on behalf of our members by producing editorials, talking points

and coordinating our members' efforts as we seek relief from Congress. We're also working closely with the News Media Alliance to ensure the best

impact for our members.

**TRAINING AND NETWORKING:** We've shifted our focus over the past 60 days to providing training specifically tailored for dealing with advertising, content and HR issues that are impacted by COVID-19. As we move back to normalcy, we will continue to seek out training from industry leaders who will share best practices and new ideas for success. Creating opportunities to come together to share ideas and renew friendships has always been important, and we know that they will continue to play an important role. We're embracing new ideas for our future meetings that will let us convene, while minimizing safety concerns associated with gatherings of large groups.

**NEWS AND INFORMATION:** With our

industry changing daily, keeping abreast is important to everyone. We provide our members with weekly newsletters and breaking alerts.

The pandemic has had such an impact on our industry that we've made our resources available to all newspapers. We are in this together and we want to share the best ways for returning to a successful operation. If you're not a member yet, we've made it easy to sign up with a trial membership. You can access our resources at newspapers.org and also learn about our annual meeting. Information about the 2021 Mega-Conference will be available on our website soon.

Thanks for all you do, and I look forward to seeing you in person when we can meet again!



**From the CEO**  
Dean Ridings

• MARKETING CAMPAIGN FROM AMERICA'S NEWSPAPERS

# Reminding local businesses that your newspaper is ready to help

AS LOCAL BUSINESSES REOPEN after being shuttered for months, they understandably feel as if they are starting from nothing and with just about nothing.

A free-to-use marketing campaign from America's Newspapers reminds local businesses that their local newspaper stands ready to help them thrive again with the resources to bring customers in the door and get registers ringing again.

These print- and digital-ready ads continue the "Newspapers have your back" theme that America's Newspapers launched with ads urging people to support their local newspaper by subscribing in print or online.

"Local newspapers have the print and digital advertising solutions to help businesses bring customers back and quickly regain lost revenue," the text reads. "Local newspapers' reach across products has never been higher. And with special packages tailored to local businesses, there are options for any size business with any budget."

The print ads include space for the name or logo of the newspaper

publishing them.

To access these ads, free of charge for your print or digital product, register at <http://newspapers.org/marketing-local-businesses/> or contact America's Newspapers Chief Marketing Officer Greg Watson at [gwatson@newspapers.org](mailto:gwatson@newspapers.org).

Individual newspapers should consider augmenting the ads with editorial that notes the marketing power of publications that have been embraced by their audiences as invaluable — and trusted — sources of news and information during the coronavirus pandemic.

Local businesses must reassure their customers that they are reopening safely — and advertising in the local trusted newspaper is the best way to communicate that message.

And local newspapers can truly feel the pain of long-shuttered local business, because they are a struggling local business themselves.

While they stayed open during lockdowns — continuing coverage that was free to everyone and printing and distributing papers as essential services on the dangerous front lines



## Local newspapers and local businesses can strengthen each other

of COVID-19 — newspapers were forced to cut wages, furlough and even lay off longtime employees because of the cataclysmic collapse of their revenue sources.

Though businesses stopped doing business with their local newspapers, the newspapers have not been idle. They have been designing advertising and marketing messages, platforms and pricing appropriate for any size business in the community.

In this unprecedented time, local newspapers and local businesses can strengthen each other as they rebuild their community as pillars of information and enterprise. During this journey into uncharted territory, send the strong message to local businesses that NEWSPAPERS HAVE YOUR BACK.

## The voice of the industry, united for change

BORN IN LATE 2019 from the merger of the Inland Press Association and Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, America's Newspapers has a new outlook on our industry and a renewed commitment to our members.

We are unified in our mission, firm in our values and committed in our vision to champion newspapers and all they bring to the communities they serve. We know that the only way to be stronger is to speak louder as one voice, united for change.

America's Newspapers will continue the work of the Inland Press Association and the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association in providing research, education and practical information all aimed at optimizing newspapers' business operations, deepening their community engagement and enhancing the quality of their journalism. America's Newspapers will also continue to reflect the culture of collegiality and sharing that characterized its predecessors. It will continue the legacy of providing an intimate forum where senior leadership can meet, share best practices and have those important hallway conversations that lead to great ideas.

### Leadership

America's Newspapers is proud to be represented by a distinguished Board of Directors dedicated to advancing the newspaper industry.

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### Staff

The America's Newspapers staff is committed to serving members' needs in any way possible. Feel free to contact any member of the staff with questions, ideas or opportunities.

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CREATIVE CIRCLE MEDIA SOLUTIONS  
CREATIVE OUTSOURCING



# Three areas newspapers can address right now

Some things you might not have been thinking about during the pandemic

NEWSPAPERS, LIKE THE REST of the news media, have had an all-coronavirus-all-the-time focus during the pandemic for the simple reason that there is virtually nothing — from community news to their own production and delivery systems, not to mention their financial state — that hasn't been touched by this public health crisis.

But there are a few tasks that may have slipped between the cracks as newspapers sent people home to work remotely, trimmed their staffs and even their print frequency. Here are three areas newspapers should be acting on now.

## Preserve your public notices

Fighting to keep public notices, and the reliable revenue they generate, in print was a constant concern for newspapers long before the pandemic.

Legislators in state after state have tried to pull public or legal notices from newspapers for years, arguing it would be cheaper and more fitting in the 21st century for government entities to publish them online on their own websites. So far, newspapers have managed to stymie all those efforts.

But the pandemic has raised a new and existential threat to newspaper public notices: Could newspapers in effect take themselves out of eligibility to publish these legal ads?

The action of some newspapers, mostly smaller weeklies, to suspend print publication as advertising cratered in pandemic lockdown could theoretically make them no longer "legal publications" for public notices.

In early April, the Public Notice Resource Center — the best source of news and defense of publishing notices in newspapers — recounted what happened in Glastonbury, Connecticut, after The Glastonbury Citizen, announced the weekly was suspending publication temporarily because of the pandemic. The town of Glastonbury then said it would publish its public notices on its municipal website rather than in the newspaper. The legal requirement to publish in a newspaper was suspended under an emergency order from Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont issued in March.

"An observer in Connecticut speculates that the governor's executive

order was inspired by a request from public officials in Glastonbury who realized they may need to purchase public notice ads in the more expensive Hartford Courant now that their regular public notice newspaper was shutting down for the duration of the crisis," PNRC Executive Director Richard Karpel wrote.

State press associations have taken notice of this new danger to public notices — and warned members not to reduce publication to the point they may not qualify as a public notice publisher under their state's requirements.

A PNRC roundup of these warnings noted the ways newspapers could take themselves out of eligibility by suspending print. The Michigan Press Association, for instance, reminded members that the state's public notice law requires newspapers to publish "not less than weekly intervals in the same community without interruption for at least 2 years." And while the law allows an exception for an "act of God" that forces a print suspension, "with no specific government orders in place and no clarity that this is an act of God, MPA would have concerns that disruption in publishing may cause you to lose your status as a 'notice' publication for both legal and public notices."

Similarly, the Mississippi Press Association warned that newspapers that don't meet the minimum publishing requirement would not just lose the right to publish notices — it would have to wait at least 12 months before it could regain eligibility.

So far, Karpel told America's Newspapers, the Connecticut case is apparently the only example of a newspaper losing its public notices.

But suspending publication could have long-term implications in the fight to preserve newspaper publi-

cation of public notices, he argues. Even temporary suspensions undercut the newspaper industry's argument that they are essential to publication of public notices.

## Mark your calendar for an upgrade

With concerts, conventions and other events that attract crowds shut down even in states that are lifting lockdowns, newspaper calendars are looking pretty bare.

They deserve a fresh look from newspapers.

The pandemic pause is a perfect time to reinvent the calendar to ensure that it is easy to use, attractive in print and online—and generating revenue.

While traditionally the newspaper calendar has been a zero-revenue feature, there are automated services now based on SaaS (software as a service) technology featuring mapping, reverse publishing to print, e-newsletters and more, all opportunities to generate revenue from event sponsors.

A user-friendly and web-syndicated calendar also reinforces the idea that the local newspaper is the best place to find and publicize events online and in print.

## Safety first, again

Even as other industries and businesses were on a forced shutdown, newspapers have been operating throughout the coronavirus pandemic. But they haven't been operating in the same way as they used to — and that can raise safety concerns publishers should be vigilant about.

Most journalists and front-office employees, for instance, have been working from home. As they return to the office, reluctantly or otherwise, they will need to feel safe. There are

obvious changes in the workplace that will be necessitated as employees return: More physical spacing, an end to "hoteling" desks and office space, hygiene reminders and stations, scrupulous cleaning of eating areas, possible routine temperature screening, etc.

What may not seem as obvious are the safety habits that should be returning in the office and production areas — but may have weakened after weeks of isolation. Newspapers will need to ensure that journalists and office workers are taking breaks from screens, and that they are incorporating best ergonomic practices in their workdays.

Newspapers will also need to pay close attention to safety issues in the pressroom, packaging area and loading docks, even though those workers have been reporting to duty continually through the pandemic.

"Workers may be months removed from performing lockout-tagout, entering permit-required confined spaces, using company safety procedures, and complying with other safety rules," lawyers at Seyfarth Shaw LLP noted in a recent newsletter. "Return to work may necessitate generalized retraining on core safety rules."

Finally, many employees may be using face coverings as they return to work in the warm summer months, elevating the risk of heat stress by increasing the temperature of breathing and elevating core body temperature.

"Employers who have employees that may be susceptible to heat illness should note and take efforts to minimize the exacerbating effects that heat may have, especially in the context of the coronavirus epidemic," the Seyfarth Shaw attorneys advise.







*When it comes to delivering results for local businesses,*

# NEWSPAPERS HAVE YOUR BACK

Local newspapers have the print and digital advertising solutions to help businesses bring customers back and quickly regain lost revenue. Local newspapers' reach across products has never been higher. And with special packages tailored to local businesses, there are options for any size business with any budget.

America's  Newspapers

Find out more at [newspapers.org](http://newspapers.org)

America's Newspapers is a national association supporting journalism and healthy newspapers in our local communities. Follow us on Twitter @newspapersorg or on Facebook @americasnewspapers.

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