****Editor's Note: This editorial is available to all newspapers to reprint.

**America’s Newspapers asks Congress for action on COVID-19 relief**

**From America's Newspapers**

America’s Newspapers is joining the News Media Alliance (the Alliance), the National Newspaper Association (NNA) and National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in asking Congress to take action on two measures that would help ensure newspapers, radio and television stations can continue to provide critical news and information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In their appeal to Congress, the four news media associations note that their member newspapers and news broadcasters are working, often in dangerous conditions, to provide reliable, critical and timely news and information during the pandemic even as the coronavirus has decimated the local businesses that are their source for advertising revenue.

“News publishers and local broadcasters have maintained their operations, provided a wide range of information at no cost, worked to protect employees in often dangerous conditions and — most of all — kept isolated individuals and families connected to their communities,” America’s Newspapers, the Alliance, NNA and NAB wrote in their appeal to Congress.

The associations noted that the rapid and likely continued drop in advertising revenue from local businesses is now threatening the very capacity of publishers and broadcasters to maintain their operations.

“In the face of business challenges that are as pervasive, insidious and grave as the coronavirus itself, our member newspapers are carrying out their mission to provide their communities with vital news and information,” America’s Newspapers CEO Dean Ridings said. “Even as our members see their revenue collapsing, they are devoting all they have to ensuring their neighbors, their Main Street businesses and their local first responders get timely and accurate information and support during this pandemic.”

This immediate business fallout from COVID-19 is coming against a backdrop of a challenging media environment for the publishers and broadcasters who serve their local communities. “Unlike many industries, the business proposition for locally-focused media — and local journalism in particular — was challenged *before* the pandemic. That situation has only worsened.”

Congress can act now in two ways to safeguard these information first responders, the associations said.

First, they are asking Congress to ensure the ability of local media to seek relief under the Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP.

PPP eligibility requirements should recognize that while many local newspapers and broadcasters may be part of larger groups, they all provide critical information to local communities — and have been harmed by the pandemic.

“Local news publisher and broadcaster eligibility for the newly-established Paycheck Protection Program relief must be determined at a local level (based on the local newspaper publisher or station) using a similar framework to that applied to restaurants and hotels,” the associations said.

Second, Congress should fund federal advertising spending on local media.

This plan is essentially a win-win-win for the federal government, local news providers and the American people, the associations said. They note that local newspapers and broadcasters can provide the government with unparalleled reach to communicate vital information — whether directed nationally or with a local focus — to communities across the nation.

Congress can ensure that people have the information they need most by directing current U.S. government advertising campaigns (such as those promoting the Census) to local news and media outlets, and by providing the Department of Health and Human Services, the Small Business Administration and other relevant agencies with an additional $5 to $10 billion for direct funding for local media advertising.

“These ads could carry information on medical resources, status of testing sites, data from the Centers for Disease Control, access to small business loans and other critical governmental information,” the publishers and broadcasters said. Any government funding should, of course, be allocated equitably among large, medium and small communities, the associations added.

“The assistance we are asking for today is an investment in sustaining the information infrastructure that is an essential element for a successful American response to this public health crisis,” America’s Newspapers CEO Ridings said.

To read the entire letter to Congress from America’s Newspapers, the Alliance, NNA and NAB, [go here](https://bit.ly/2JR6xKH).

*On behalf of its approximately 1,500 newspaper and associate member companies, America’s Newspapers is committed to explaining, defending and advancing the vital role of newspapers in democracy and civil life. We put an emphasis on educating the public on all the ways newspapers contribute to building a community identity and the success of local businesses. Learn more:* [*www.newspapers.org*](http://www.newspapers.org)

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