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

**From America's Newspapers**

San Francisco and six Bay Area counties, with a combined population of nearly 7 million, are under “shelter-in-place” orders directing everyone to basically stay inside their homes for the next three weeks in hopes of suppressing the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the region.

It looks like many of us are going to be living under similar shelter-in-place orders sooner or later. Bedroom community New Rochelle, New York, has a “zone of containment,” and at this writing, New York City’s mayor is considering an order sending everyone inside in The City That Never Sleeps, which will surely encourage other municipalities to issue their own shelter-in-place edicts. At the national level, there are doubtless officials who gaze longingly at the lockdowns ordered across Spain and Italy.

One key to shelter-in-place orders is that businesses that do not provide “essential” services must send workers home. Most coverage lists the essential services as grocery stores, pharmacies, banks and vital services from police and fire fighters to utility workers.

In California, newspapers are among the essential services exempt from shelter in place.

And that is exactly how it should be.

It is imperative that all future shelter-in-place orders recognize that newspapers provide “essential services.” It’s imperative that these orders recognize their communities badly need those services in this crisis — and would be imperiled by their absence.

Day in and day out, newspapers bind communities together, enhancing civic life and informing, entertaining and educating their local audiences.

But it is during crises that newspapers prove their mettle. In hurricanes, in floods, in tornadoes and wildfires, newspapers have provided the information, the background, the warnings and the directions to financial and psychological aid that help communities prepare, survive and rebuild in emergencies.

Newspapers are especially essential in this COVID-19 public health crisis.

For one thing, it is a complex and often baffling crisis. Again and again, public health experts speak of being in “unchartered territory” confronting this invisible, shape-shifting deadly menace.

Newspapers are uniquely situated to provide the extensive background people need to understand as a community and as individuals. In these weeks of crisis, they have ceaselessly delivered the best practices for individual and community hygiene. Newspapers (in print and online) continue to demonstrate their ability to tackle and explain complex issues with the necessary and important details.

Newspapers have also been a voice demanding accountability on behalf of their communities during this COVID-19 crisis — from a president who denounced coronavirus as a “hoax” to administration officials overpromising and failing to deliver testing kits to lies and fudging of disease statistics.

And when this crisis passes and office workers flock back to their cubicles and waitresses to their dining stations, line cooks to their restaurant kitchens, bartenders to their taverns, actors to their stages, beer vendors to their stadiums, cashiers to their registers — when, in short, America begins to rebuild its economy, its trust and its health, newspapers will continue to provide the essential services vital to the commonweal.

Are newspapers “essential services”? You bet.

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)