**A person wearing a suit and tie smiling at the camera

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

**In coronavirus crisis, count newspapers among the local businesses that need help**

**From America's Newspapers**

From this coronavirus public health crisis, though it has been with us barely three months, two lessons are clear: Accurate information quickly reported and disseminated widely has the potential to slow the rampage of COVID-19 infections and deaths — and misinformation will surely accelerate its spread and destruction.

It has fallen to local news publishers to provide the explanations, clarify the details and to even separate unclear or misleading statements from local, state and national leaders, to help their communities cope and combat this 21st century plague.

It is newspapers that deliver the news, often distressing news, about local outbreaks, testing sites or shortages, local and state restrictions on businesses and assemblies, and educate individuals on what they can do to protect themselves, their families and their neighbors.

The value of this information to the American people can be seen in the soaring increases in online traffic to newspaper sites and the life-saving actions the information inspires.

But for newspapers, this civic stewardship has come at a cost as devastating as the damage to the economy at large. The litany of businesses and industries slowed or shut down, justifiably, by the urgent task of curbing COVID-19 is virtually the same as the advertising categories that sustained local newspapers for decades:  local retailers, bars and restaurants, concerts and events, real estate, travel and more.

This week, America’s Newspapers joined with the News Media Alliance — two organizations that between them represent thousands of local news publishers across the United States — to start a dialogue with our top elected officials about what role the federal government can play in ensuring the survival of the vital services newspapers provide.

“Unfortunately, many local news publishers are now facing an existential crisis of their own,” we wrote in a letter to President Trump, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

America’s Newspapers and the Alliance understand that some may view involving government with a free press as a fraught option. “Obviously, independent journalism and government action have an inherent and necessary tension, and we should look for solutions that maintain a separation of interests,” we wrote. “But we also all have a mutual need to sustain local news publishing so that it can collectively get us through this crisis — and the next one.”

In effect, we are telling Washington that the journalism that can only be produced by local news publishers should be regarded as a public good — as vital to our communities, states and our nation as the electrical grid, water networks, flood control systems and our defense forces.

The coronavirus public health crisis has forced this reckoning. We look forward to healing the system that brings vital information to Americans even as American business and workers look forward to recovering from the virus.

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)